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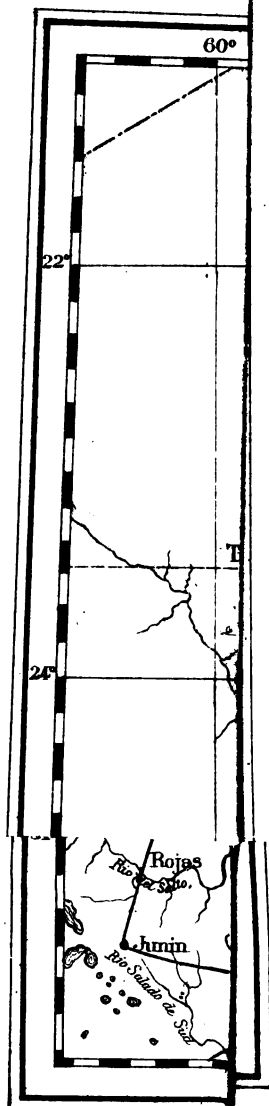
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A PARAGUAYAN TREASURE.

1900



J. A. Smith.
Christmas 1892

A

PARAGUAYAN TREASURE:

THE SEARCH AND THE DISCOVERY.

BY

ALEXANDER F. BAILLIE, F.R.G.S.,

Member of the *Sociedad Rural Argentina*, &c.

With Route Map and Plans.

LONDON:
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO.,
STATIONERS' HALL COURT.

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A PARAGUAYAN TREASURE.

CHAPTER I.

A GOLD-SEEKING MANIA.

WE were a lot of schoolboys trooping up the hill that connects Portsmouth with Southsea Common, on a glorious midsummer afternoon early in the "fifties" of the present century, to all appearances in the very best of spirits, and intent on turning to good account our Saturday half-holiday, by playing a game of cricket. One tossed a ball in the air, a second whirled about his bat, and others used the stumps they carried, as walking sticks ; and so we trudged along, until we reached the wooden structure in the centre of the Common, that raises its lofty head to the level of the surrounding houses, and forms the object of much inquiry on the part of new arrivals ; and of many extraordinary and imaginative rejoinders from the resident boatmen, who, on some occasions, describe it as the old gallows for hanging pirates, on others, as a semaphore that formerly supplied the place of telegraphic wires, and who sometimes speak the truth, and tell you that it is a landmark for vessels entering the harbour.

B

At the foot of this tall mast we halted, as was invariably our custom, to draw breath, and to toss for sides. This operation was performed by two of the seniors, with all the formality and seriousness, appropriate to the justly balancing of opposing parties, notwithstanding a natural inclination on the part of the choosers to outbid one another in obtaining the strongest players ; and each nominee, as he was summoned, crossed over to the side of his chief.

The youngsters watched eagerly to hear their names called, for to be named fourth or fifth to-day, when you were sixth or seventh at the last game, is decided promotion ; and although I knew that on this afternoon I could not play, I was still very pleased and gratified when "Penistone" was the fourth name called.

"Here!" I answered, "but I can't play to-day ; I must go home to my grandfather."

"Oh, hang the old pirate!" said Jack Twyford. "Why can't you play?"

"What do you mean? Who is an old pirate?" I inquired, angrily.

"Why, the Commodore, of course, old Kearsney, who else? Didn't he make his money on the Spanish Main?"

"I don't know," I said, "but he is no pirate, and so take that."

The blow that I struck changed to some extent the afternoon's arrangements. Before pitching the

wickets, a ring was formed under the castle, and there Jack and I settled our differences.

If victory should have proved, according to the law of battle, that my cause was just, and that my grandfather was wrongfully called a pirate, then I suppose that defeat must prove the contrary. My opponent was bigger and older, and consequently it is hardly right to stake my relative's reputation on the strength or weakness of my wrists; but I must confess that I was badly beaten, and went home with such disfiguring marks upon my face that any question as to my appearing in church on the following morning was quietly shelved.

My grandfather asked me no questions, but he heard the whole story from Charley Rayne, a schoolfellow younger than myself, who lived next door, and had been present at the combat.

Jack Twyford had spoken hastily, and in a moment of irritation; but, nevertheless, the opinion that he expressed was held by a good many of the residents in Portsmouth and Southsea. These are places frequently selected for retirement, by half-pay officers of both services, with limited means, and among them my grandfather had come to settle, in comparison, a rich man. He never attempted to hide the fact that he had passed many years in South America, and, as parts of that continent, long before his time, had been the hotbed of piracy and buccaneering, so at once it was decided that his money had not been earned by

legitimate means. The character thus given to him produced, to a certain extent, an estrangement between the "Commodore," as he was always called, though actually only a retired commander of the Royal Navy, and his compeers. They were civil, and always ready to meet and converse with him, but he had no intimate friends, with the exception of Mrs. Rayne, the mother of my schoolfellow; and gradually he became more and more isolated, and was thrown for amusement on his own resources. Nothing could exceed his kindness to me; he had willingly undertaken the duty of bringing up the child of his only daughter, after her death and that of her husband, and he faithfully fulfilled it, except that he introduced into our system of domestic education a course of study which has proved the bane of my life.

Charley Rayne had been closely cross-examined by the Commodore, on all the incidents of the combat, under the parapets of Southsea Castle, and had not minced matters, but had told him how it originated and repeated the very epithet of which Twyford had made use.

I imagine that the old gentleman considered that, some explanation was due to me, although I was only a lad of twelve, for from that time he began to "cultivate my acquaintance." In that way only can I speak of the commencement of the close, and confidential friendship, that grew up between us, and lasted until his death, seven years later.

His approaches at first were shy and cautious, but his hesitation soon passed away, and by degrees I came to prefer his society to that of companions of my own age, and deserted cricket, hockey, and football for long "talks" with the old sailor.

From him I heard all that there was to tell regarding my own birth and parents.

Lieut. Arthur Penistone, of the Bengal Engineers, died at Ghuznee, shortly after the successful attack on that fortress, by the troops under the command of Sir John Keane.

In later years I have made inquiries about Ghuznee, and have met and conversed with officers who were present at the assault. It was a strong place in Cabul, defended by a son of the redoubtable Dhost Mahomed, who was well supplied with men, and arms, and ammunition. The fort was gallantly captured by a small force, and the Engineers played the principal part in the action. On the morning of the 23rd July, 1839, a party, consisting of Captain Alex. C. Peat, of that distinguished corps, and three other officers, of whom my father was one, advanced on the Cabul Gate, and attached to it the bags of powder with which they were provided. The explosion that followed burst it in, and made way for the storming party, under the leadership of Colonel Dennie, that poured into the town before the enemy had recovered from their surprise. No officer of the Sappers lost his billet on that

famous occasion, but a few days later, Lieut. Penistone, when employed on the demolition of some out-works, was killed by the premature explosion of a mine.

The assault on the Cashmere Gate of Delhi, eighteen years later, in September, 1857, was a parallel and equally brilliant achievement of the Bengal Engineers, and received much warmer recognition on the part of the public; not that the gallant deed of Salkeld and Home surpassed that of Peat and his companions, but because the stakes were much greater. At Ghuznee, the Sappers were in the van for the punishment of a rebel; at Delhi, for the maintenance of an empire. On both occasions they did their duty, and at the Cashmere Gate, Salkeld died in its performance, and Home, a fortnight later, was killed by the accidental springing of a mine in the Fort of Malagurh.

My mother died in giving me birth, very shortly after her husband's death, and, in the course of a few months, I was handed over in safety to her father, now a childless widower.

So long as he lived he stood to me *loco parentis*, but the question has frequently risen in my mind whether the obligations under which he laid me have not been out-balanced by the harm he unwittingly did me.

To him is due the fact that I have been a wanderer for years; that I never settled down to any fixed employment; that my life, though not without an aim

has been to a great extent an useless one; that, although I have travelled far and wide, no one has benefited by my experiences; and that throughout my life, though never actually insane, I have been the victim of a delusion. This took the form of a constant passion for gold-seeking; not the gold that, in the imagination of alchemists of the middle ages, could be made by the conversion of baser metals; not the gold that, according to the idea of many enthusiasts, is to be drawn from the gambling-table or the Stock Exchange; not even the gold that is to be found by luck and perseverance in Queensland or the Transvaal. No; the gold of my thoughts and dreams was to be deposited, to be placed for me ready to hand, if I would only take the trouble to seek for it. This was the lesson constantly instilled into me. No matter what subjects gave rise to our daily conversations, they always tended to that one point with which my grandfather's mind was occupied. His conviction was that in many remote corners of the earth—in many distant seas—were deposited hoards of wealth, that had been designedly secreted, or accidentally lost. But he did not hold to this belief as a mere day dreamer; he had, at least in his own opinion, a good foundation for his credulity.

Captain Kearsney in early life, had seen a good deal of active service, and was fond of recounting the story of his first action. As a midshipman he was present at the cutting out of the *Cerbère*, a French

gun-brig, from the harbour of l'Orient, an action which he declared to have been decided by a midshipman younger than himself, who in the nick of time brought up his boat in support, as the boarding party was being driven back over the brig's sides. I am ashamed to say that I have forgotten the name of this gallant lad, but to him, according to my grandfather, the French commandant surrendered his sword. Hugh Kearsney was a lieutenant in 1814, and was actively engaged during that year in the operations against the Americans; and, I believe, that after the peace he was placed on the retired list with the rank of commander. This seems to have been the end of his career in the Royal Navy, but his life at sea did not terminate with his retirement from the king's service. He married shortly afterwards, and for two or three years lived quietly at Southsea, but in 1818 he was in Chili when the Independence was declared; and later on he was employed by other States of South America, especially by Colombia, in whose service he remained for some years, as commander of its only ship of war.

Cartagena, a sea-port of this State, had been two-hundred years before one of the chief centres of the buccaneers, and there were still many traditions of their wealth, their luxury, their bravery, and their cruelties. Islands were named, and districts were pointed out, in which riches were said to have been

deposited ; but no one spot was sufficiently well-defined, as to induce my grandfather to institute a search. He set himself to work, however, to study the question on scientific principles. With the vessel under his command, and with ample leisure, he followed the course of winds and currents, to see whither they would have driven a vessel under less favourable conditions of navigation than he possessed ; or where a ship would have run when hard pressed by an enemy, and striving to seek a port, no matter where. His crew, chiefly composed of mestizos, or half-breds, soon grew to take an interest in proceedings, the object of which he never pretended to hide ; and the authorities of the State sanctioned, and fostered his voyages of discovery. For a long period they gave no results. The winds and currents led him to many of the islands with which the Caribbean Sea is studded, at that period, for the most part, uninhabited ; and he searched them thoroughly, but invariably without any return. At length, however, his efforts were rewarded with some success, accidental, but, at the same time, of a nature to satisfy him that he had been right in allowing his vessel to be driven by wind and tide, if he hoped to follow in the wake of the lawless mariners, who for many years had controlled those seas. His brigantine, the *Talisman*, was homeward bound from a long cruise, during which visits had been made to several of the islands in the mouth of the Gulf of Honduras. She was,

following the very course that would have been taken by the buccaneers returning to New Granada, after a raid on the coast of Mexico or Nicaragua, when she was suddenly caught, in the Gulf of Columbus, by one of those terrible hurricanes which frequently scourge the West Indies, and the Caribbean Sea. It was in the summer of 1825, in the very year that Guadeloupe was nearly demolished in a cyclone; and my grandfather's belief was that the storm caught him, before it broke over that island. To some extent he was prepared, as he had noted the sudden depression of the barometer, but during the time that the hurricane lasted, it was terrific.

When it had passed, he found the *Talisman* partially dismantled, and close to one of those banks to which, in navigating these seas, he had always given the widest of berths.

His first thought was to get his vessel away from the dangerous spot as quickly as possible, for he was quite out of his course, and in latitudes but little known at that time to navigators, though now constantly traversed by steam vessels.

His attention was, however, attracted to an object lying on the bank, which, after closer scrutiny, he decided was a vessel of some description. The first idea was, that a ship had been caught by the same hurricane through which he had just passed, but had been less fortunate in escaping, and had been driven ashore; and, being naturally a humane man, he

determined, at all risks, to see whether anyone remained alive. Not daring to leave his ship in so dangerous a position, he sent off a boat under the charge of his mate, and watched its movements from his quarter-deck. The mate, on his return, reported that it was a very old schooner embedded in the sand, and covered at high tide by the sea ; that she was nearly broken in two, and that part of her cargo was displayed to view. When asked of what it consisted, he replied that he had only seen the ends of what appeared to be chests roughly made, and hooped with iron ; but that a boy had got through the stern cabin window, and brought out this—handing to my grandfather a shapeless mass of sand and shells. The Captain remained in thought for a few seconds, and then gave instructions as to the ship's course. They soon left the bank and the wrecked schooner behind them, but not before their bearings had been carefully taken. On the homeward run my grandfather was deeply engaged in cleansing the object that the mate had handed to him, and, after great difficulty, he succeeded in clearing away the outside coating of shells and sand.

By degrees it took the form of a rail or pillar, about 24 inches in height, and when thoroughly cleansed he found himself in possession of a bar of metal, undoubtedly silver, though old and black, worked into the shape of a baluster, which had probably once formed part of the ornamental work surrounding the

altar of a church or cathedral. The natural deduction was that it was one of a set, and that probably many others were lying in the hold of the old ship on the bank. So the Captain thought, and once he started up with the intention of putting back, and examining for himself the contents of the schooner, but wiser self-counsel prevailed when he called to mind the fact that his vessel was partially crippled, and would be unable to weather, in her present condition, anything like a gale. He, therefore, determined to return to port to refit, and then to sail again for the bank.

During the voyage he pondered over the whole business, and formed his conclusions and decided upon his future steps.

His belief was that he had lighted upon a treasure ship of the Spaniards, or a piratical vessel of the buccaneers, on its way to New Granada after a successful raid on some town, situated on the coast of Central America ; and he was inclined to think that it was the latter, for it was difficult to account for any honest Spaniard being found in that neighbourhood. That the vessel might have remained undiscovered for many years was not at all improbable. The bank was not absolutely unknown to navigators, but few were acquainted with its exact position, as it was not on the direct route between any two given ports, and, in the Captain's opinion, the schooner had probably been caught in a gale similar to that which

had just endangered the *Talisman*, and had carried her to the same point.

The question of ownership of the bank caused him no uneasiness. Whether it belonged to Colombia, to Nicaragua, or to Venezuela was a matter of indifference, but he claimed it for the former, as he was sailing under her flag ; and he was well aware that the Government of the State would give no weight to the claims of her neighbours, but would at once seize upon any treasure that might exist. He had, however, to look after his own interests.

While riches were only a dream of the future, the authorities had been full of promises, but if there was a likelihood that such dreams could be realised, and that the riches existed within a few days' sail ; judging from his knowledge of the native character, he thought it very probable that a case might be made out to prove that the ownership rested with the State alone, seeing that a Government vessel had been the means of discovery. He, therefore, had carefully to consider the course that he should pursue in order to secure his just rights, while still acting honestly to his employers.

No one on board his ship knew the value of the sample from the schooner's cargo that he had in his cabin, and no one of the crew was capable of navigating the *Talisman* back to the bank. The game was consequently pretty well in his own hands, and the result would depend upon his playing it well.

Although Colombia possessed but one small vessel

of war, she had a Minister of War and Marine, who held the duplicate title of General and Admiral. With this high official my grandfather held long and frequent communications. He pointed out that hurricanes have a defined law of progression, although there may be great differences in their violence ; that in the northern hemisphere the storm is almost invariably carried from S.W. to N.E. ; that the course he had been following was the same that would have been taken by a vessel a hundred years before ; and that such a vessel, caught in a cyclone, would in all probability have been driven to the very bank that he had sighted. He referred the Admiral to his mate and boat's crew to prove the existence of the wreck ; and he clenched all his arguments by displaying the silver rail that had been brought off.

The Admiral did not require much pressing. In a ponderous manner he thanked the Captain for the services he had rendered to the State, and assured him that they would be adequately rewarded, if the expectations that he had raised should be realized.

CHAPTER II.

THE WRECK.

WHEN details came to be arranged, Captain Kearsney soon caught a glimpse of the cloven foot. He came to the conclusion that his gallant chief was thinking much more about his own pocket than of the weal of the State, and he strongly suspected that the Admiral regarded him as a stumbling-block in his way. "I will take command myself of the expedition, Señor Capitan," he said. "Of course I will not interfere with your functions, although, at the same time, as representing the State and the Marine Department, I must have full control." The Captain bowed, and mentioned that, in his opinion, it would be necessary to have a consort for the *Talisman*, a small vessel of light draught of water, which would be able to approach much nearer to the bank than his own ship, and that he would resign the command of the *Talisman* and take charge of the consort. At first the Admiral appeared to assent to this plan, which exactly met my grandfather's views. He had decided that his career in the service of Colombia should terminate so soon as the voyage to the bank had been accomplished.

If he failed, he knew that, as an unsuccessful man, he would be covered with opprobrium ; and if he succeeded, he desired to place in security, his share of whatever might be recovered from the wreck.

Negotiations were carried on for some days, during which he matured his project. A large piroga, or nativeboat, was purchased and prepared for the voyage, and a crew for navigating her was made over from the *Talisman*. The sailors, as already mentioned, were chiefly Indians, natives of the mainland, but, in addition, there were several islanders of different nationalities, who had no other ties to Colombia than their own interests. These the Captain selected for *El Descubridor* (the Discovery) as the new boat was called, and the boatswain, the only Englishman under his command, was placed in charge of her. The *Talisman's* complement was made up with Indians of Cartagena.

Meanwhile it had been necessary for the Admiral to discuss the whole business with his colleagues in the Government, and it soon became apparent that they were as jealous and suspicious of him, as he was of his subordinate, the Captain.

Ultimately it was decided to send a Commission, composed of the Admiral and two other officials, who represented different parties in the Cabinet, and who, while supposed to be in the employment of the State, was each of them to act for the benefit of his respective clique.

But further additions to the expedition had still to be made. The Captain pointed out that if, as he hoped, wealth, to a considerable extent, should be discovered, there was a danger that had to be considered, namely, that which might arise from his own crew. They bore no very high character at any time, and there was a large element of thieves and murderers among them; for it was an usual custom to ship an incorrigible scoundrel on board the State man-of-war, partly in the hope of improving him by strict discipline, but chiefly in order to get rid of him. One member of the commission suggested that a company of soldiers should be taken to counteract the sailors. To this the Captain demurred, on the grounds that the soldiers were no better than the sailors; that probably they would all combine, and that there was no room for them on board. He recommended another plan namely, that, before the *Talisman* and her consort set sail, a certain portion of any treasure that might be found, should be assigned to the crew, another to the State, and a third to himself; and that the portion accruing to each should be ascertained, and delivered to its owner, on the bank itself. By this means, he pointed out, that each individual would have an interest in the cargo; and that if a mutiny should occur, the crew would, to a great extent, be divided amongst themselves. This recommendation was adopted, and, after a great deal of haggling, terms were arranged. The property, of whatever it might consist, was to be

divided into five parts, one of which was to be the portion of the crew, one to belong to the captain, and the remaining three-fifths were to be held by the commissioners, for the State or for their own benefit, according as their conscience and honour might lead them to decide. Contracts and documents setting forth this arrangement were duly signed, and a number of *tasadores*, or prize-agents, were selected, and added to the ship's company, whose duties were to estimate the value of any treasure that might be recovered.

And so at length the Captain, in command of the *Talisman*, with the *Descubridor* in close proximity, set forth on his last venture, after a great deal of cannon-firing and other noisy demonstrations.

Although the sea was calm, the Admiral and several of his party were confined to their berths for the first two days, and during that period the Captain tried the sailing powers of the *Descubridor*. Her performance gave him the greatest satisfaction, for he found that she could hold her own against the *Talisman*.

When the Admiral made his appearance on deck, it was in a gorgeous uniform of gold, *picked out* with blue, the epaulets being so large, and the braiding on the breast, arms, and pockets so heavy, that the cloth seemed to be hidden under the bullion. The upper man wore the dress of a naval officer of the period, but the legs were cased in white leathers, terminating

in Napoleon boots and spurs, to represent his dignity of a General in the armies of Colombia.

The Captain found him not only a troublesome and inconvenient passenger, but also a dangerous one. Although absolutely incapable of taking the command, yet he frequently gave orders in direct contradiction to those of the officer in charge. He was "hail fellow well met" with the crew, and particularly with the "Caribs," descendants of Negroes and Indians, who have always had the reputation of being the best seamen, and the most dreaded pirates on the coast.

With them he conversed in their own dialect, of which the Captain had but a very slight knowledge; but he soon found that promises had been given of a large bonus, in addition to their designated share, to those who would blindly follow the Admiral's directions.

Being the only navigator on board, my grandfather knew that for the time he was a necessity that could not be dispensed with, and therefore he did not fear any immediate attempt against his life, but if once the savage blood of the Indians was aroused it would be very difficult to appease.

He expostulated with the Admiral's colleagues; he pointed out the danger that they themselves were running, and he carried all the sail that he could, both on the *Talisman* and the piroga, in order to reach his destination as quickly as possible.

At length the bank was sighted, and the *Talisman* anchored in the safest spot that the Captain could select, some few miles from the wreck. The excitement and enthusiasm were very great, and this the Admiral increased by ordering a salvo to be fired. With the enthusiasm there was, however, a good deal of disaffection, and already the preliminary signs of mutiny. The greater part of the crew were making preparations to land before any orders had been given, and the expostulations of the Captain and officers were but little heeded. The danger was imminent; the Admiral's colleagues charged him with having caused it, and he himself recognised that the position was very critical. He had raised a storm which it would be very difficult to appease, but, urged on by his fellow-commissioners and their followers, he made an effort to still the troubled waters. He began to talk again, this time to the whole crew, instead of to individuals, and his line of argument was entirely changed. He no longer put forward his personal offer of an additional bonus, but he stated that the Government would not fail to recognise the services that the ship's company had given, and were about to give; he expatiated on the necessity of implicit obedience to the supreme Government, whose servants they were, and to the officers appointed by that Government; then he pointed to the flag flying at the stern, and appealed to their patriotism to support its honour; in fact, had his speech been addressed to a

man-of-war's crew of one, and the same nationality, about to go into action, it might have raised their enthusiasm, and they would have quickly stripped and gone to the guns ; but on a mixed crew of Indians, Caribs, and half-casts, whose interest in the "fatherland" was very remote, his "high-fallutin" in the Spanish language produced no effect, and called forth no signs of approval.

Matters grew rather worse, when he proceeded to explain that the Captain must leave the ship in order to navigate the *Descubridor* closer in shore ; and that it was a primary duty of the commissioners to land and inspect the supposed treasure, and that the prize agents must accompany them, in order to divide it in accordance with the strict terms of their agreements. He assured them on his honour that he was acting in good faith, and placing his fingers in the form of a cross, he kissed them and took a solemn oath to the "Virgin" that every condition should be fulfilled. No applause followed the conclusion of his speech, but only a dull murmur, which grew deeper and deeper until at length a loud strong voice rose above it. "Que demonios," said a burly negro, in Spanish. "no son mas que tantos traidores, que van á cargar el piroga y desertarnos !" (They are a lot of traitors who are going to load the piroga and abandon us.) Then the Captain stepped to the front, for he thought it was time to interfere. He assured them he was no traitor ; he reminded them of the years

that most of them had served under his command ; he pointed out that his interests were closely allied to their own, for he wanted his share of the treasure equally with themselves ; he showed them that the ship could not be left unmanned, but that they would be well represented on shore by the men of the piroga and of his own launch, and he concluded by recommending that one of the commissioners should remain on board as a pledge of good faith. "Si, si," was the reply, "Denos rehenes !" (Leave us hostages.)

The storm was calmed, and the men broke into groups to discuss the business. They shortly put forward a spokesman, who stated their conditions, namely, that the Admiral and two prize-agents should remain on board as hostages, and that the remainder of the Commission might land, but that within twenty-four hours they should prove the existence of a treasure by sending off samples, or they should return to the ship.

The engineer hoist with his own petard ! The chief commissioner, an admiral and a general, the mainstay of the expedition, to be detained a prisoner, while his despised colleagues were to have the glory of bringing to light the hidden treasures of the schooner whose bulwarks were just visible ! It was a terrible fall, but there was no help for it ; he had raised the whirlwind, and now he must take the consequences. The Captain took no active part, but the

commissioners and their followers accepted willingly the decision of the crew, and the Admiral found himself unsupported, except by the two prize-agents, his own followers, who seemed to be pushed across to him to share in his captivity.

Action was then speedily taken ; the Captain had his gig's crew piped away, and handed over charge of the *Talisman* to his first officer. The two commissioners with their followers stepped into the boat, and, under a round of cheers from the whole crew, she was shoved off. They soon reached the *Descubridor*, which, under the Captain's orders, was immediately headed for the bank.

It was on a bright autumn morning, in the month of November, that the pirogue cast anchor as near to the shore as it seemed safe to approach, and in after years the old captain has many times given to me his first impressions, on reaching the desert land. I hesitate to repeat his words, for, not being a nautical man, I may fall, through want of memory of what he actually said, into many grievous errors, and may raise against him a "professional" laugh, which would be undeserved, for he was undoubtedly a good and experienced sailor ; but so far as my understanding went at the age of fourteen or fifteen, he depicted the scene and the circumstances that had led to the disaster, somewhat in the following terms :—

"We only drew five feet in the stern, and not seeing any signs of rock, I ran on until the bows of

the piroga struck the sand ; there I anchored about two cable's lengths from the beach, and about the same distance from the wreck, which seemed to be lying with her bows north-west and her poop on our starboard bow. While the men got out the hatchets, saws, and spades, with which we were well supplied, I had a good look at the bank. It was of red sand, and seemed to incline upwards from the seashore for about half a mile.

"It was by no means level, for wherever a piece of wood, or even of seaweed, had been carried by the wind, that alone had formed the basis of a sand-hill. The little mound, first raised over a very small object, had gone on increasing until the whole island was covered with hillocks of sand, some of them probably twenty feet in height.

"Nor was it totally without verdure, for in many places seeds, wafted from the mainland, or perhaps carried by birds, had fallen and taken root, and although the grass was coarse, and the shrubs few and far between—as they appeared through my glass—yet I noticed more than one green spot, which gave colour to the otherwise desolate shore. Turning from the higher ground I scanned the beach whereon the schooner was lying, and at first I stood amazed at my own stupidity, in imagining that she had been coming down the coast, and had been thrown in a hurricane upon the bank ; for, to all appearance, she had been carried up from the south-east, and

been driven before a gale right on to the sand. If this had been the case, then all my calculations were upset, for no treasure-ship ever sailed that course. But a calmer review confirmed my first impressions, and I fancied that I could explain the cause and manner of the catastrophe.

“The vessel must have been overtaken by a gale somewhere about the neighbourhood where the *Talisman* was caught in my previous voyage. She was driven before it to the south-east of the bank, where probably she was enveloped in the vortex of the whirlwind. Contact with the shore made a casual breach in the circular wall, and thence she was shot like a stone from a catapult, with her head to the north-west. When a little later, she was laid bare, my opinion was confirmed. She had plunged like an arrow, with the head deep into the sand, while the stern, like the feathers, would have stood up in the air had not the hull parted amidships, and so allowed the after part to fall to the ground.”

This was, more or less, the Commodore's story up to the time of his landing on the bank; a story calculated in every way, to interest a school-boy, and to excite in him a passion for adventure; so it did in me, and so great was its effect in forming my future course of life, that I have perhaps dwelt too long upon the incident. Having, however, gone so far, I must conclude the history of the wreck before proceeding with my own narrative.

CHAPTER III.

LOOTING THE BANK.

THE *Descubridor* was safely at anchor, and the Captain and commissioners landed in the gig, with but little trouble, and only at the cost of wet feet. They proceeded somewhat hurriedly, and in rather an undignified manner, to the spot on which the schooner was lying. They found her to be a vessel of about 100 tons burthen, lying on her side and broken in two pieces.

Undoubtedly of considerable age, her timbers were still in good preservation, and, as the Captain pointed out, the report of his mate had been misleading, for she had been thrown so high up, that his statement as to her being covered by the tide was incorrect. Undoubtedly, during a gale she would be washed by the sea, and thus, to a certain extent, kept free from sand, otherwise, in a very short time, she must have been completely covered over.

If she had a crew on board when she struck, the impact alone, in the Captain's opinion, must have thrown every living soul, dead or wounded, on to the

bank, and probably, they were lying buried under the mounds of sand.

When the wreck was broken up, the skeleton of a man was found in the hold crushed by the cargo, but there were no means of knowing whether he had perished at the time of the wreck, or previously to it.

No time was lost in setting to work, for, as my grandfather pointed out to the commissioners, the patience of the half-mutinous crew of the *Talisman* would soon be exhausted, and then they would commence to give trouble. All set to work with a will, and, under the instructions of the boatswain, even the commissioners rendered great assistance.

Openings were quickly made in all parts of the hull, and the contents of the vessel were soon displayed to view. Everything was covered with sand, but, in many instances, this was loose, and easily removed.

In the cabin, as my grandfather had expected, were found a large number of rails similar to the one in his possession, and as quickly as they were handed out, they were divided into lots; of every five, three were placed on one side for the commissioners, one was assigned to the Captain, and the fifth to the crew. The ship appeared to have been loaded in the greatest haste, for no attempt had been made to secure the cargo, and the dispatch made in discharging her was equally great.

One promising discovery was made, in the shape of

two barrels of specie, but so hardened by the sand and water that it was impossible to decide of what metal it consisted. To attempt to count the money was impracticable, but the masses were broken with hatchets, and a division was made on the same principle as the rails, by measuring them in a bucket brought from the piroga.

As the day commenced to decline, the party was still hard at work, when suddenly the report of a gun boomed across the water. It was at once recognised as an expression of impatience and anxiety on the part of the crew of the *Talisman*, which it was necessary to allay. Measures were immediately taken. One of the commissioners agreed to take off to the ship the portion of the booty belonging to the crew, but before its removal the boatswain and sailors of the piroga, claimed and obtained their share. The piroga then started with her valuable cargo, and, after transshipping it by the *Talisman's* boats to that vessel, returned to the bank.

By the middle of the next day everything that appeared to be worth carrying away had been cleared from the wreck, and the Captain recommended that whatever remained should be abandoned to the crew. The commissioners willingly agreed, for they were weary of the work and labour to which they were unaccustomed. The piroga made another voyage, taking with her all the Government officials and the gig's crew, and on her return, the portion belonging

to my grandfather was at once shipped on board, together with the sailors' booty.

And now arose the question, how the escape of the piroga was to be managed. That she could outsail the *Talisman* was unquestionable; but a shot from that vessel might easily sink her. My grandfather called for the boat, and accompanied by his boatswain, pulled aboard the ship-of-war. He found her nearly unmanned, for the greater part of the crew had availed themselves of the permission to go on shore, and were busily engaged in searching for more booty among the débris on the bank. There was no one to receive him as he stepped on deck, but from the cuddy came sounds of merriment, the clatter of plates, and the clink of glasses. On looking down the skylight, he beheld the Admiral seated at the head of a table, which was covered with such luxuries and dainties as the ship's pantry could afford. The commissioners and their subordinates occupied the sides of the table; and the whole party, having thrown aside their coats and waistcoats for greater comfort, were thoroughly enjoying themselves, and, already showed signs of not having spared the bottle.

The Captain's entrance was hailed with acclamations; a seat was provided for him on the right of the Admiral, his glass was filled, and his health was drunk in bumpers. Then followed speech after speech, every individual claiming his right to propose a toast, which was drunk with loud applause, with a

furious hammering of the table, and a great clattering of crockery.

But time was passing quickly, and from the stern ports my grandfather could see, that preparations were being made by the crew for leaving the bank, and returning to the ship.

He therefore stated his intention of going on board the piroga, to see that everything was in order before they sailed that evening. At this there was considerable demur, for the officials, already deep in their cups, were unwilling that even one member should leave them, and when the Admiral, who had reached a maudlin state, expressed his intention of accompanying his "*querido amigo, el Señor Capitan*" they saw that the convivial party must be broken up. My grandfather made every effort to induce the Admiral to remain on board, but unavailingly; and at length, as time pressed, he was forced to accept his society, although, he did so under the apprehension that that gallant officer might come to grief in getting in, or out of, a boat, for his sea-legs were decidedly untrustworthy.

The boatswain was waiting at the gangway, and, as the Captain approached, he touched his hat, and said, "All right, sir!"

They got on board without accident, and, then the Admiral called for another bottle of wine. This however the piroga did not possess, but he was supplied

with *caña*, or native rum, and shortly afterwards fell fast asleep upon a settee.

At sunset the Captain endeavoured to awaken him ; but it was some time before he succeeded. At length he sat up, partially recovered from his drunken bout, but still very hazy and dazed. He looked about him, and inquired where he was. "On board the piroga, said my grandfather, "and we are just going to sea." "Going to sea in the piroga ! Captain, what do you mean ?" "That I am bound for Jamaica, Admiral, and wish to know whether you desire to accompany me, or to return to the *Talisman*." Then a light broke upon the Admiral, and he began to understand the situation. He stamped and raved, and swore, called the Captain *traidor*, *desertor*, *rebelde*, *mal-dito herege*, and heaped upon him every opprobrious title that he could remember. He appealed to St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, and all the holy Apostles, to the three kings of Cologne, to the ten thousand virgins of Saragossa, and to the whole heavenly Court, and to many other saints and patrons too numerous to mention, to bring down immediate punishment on his insubordinate officer ; and, then he mumbled about his colleagues, and the treasure, and actually wept, as he thought of his separation from the wealth that had been within his grasp.

My grandfather waited patiently until his passion had to some extent evaporated, and then inquired what was his decision.

"Put me on board, sir, at once, and directly I am there I will sink you."

"That is hardly a reason for my putting you on board, Señor Almirante, but I will do so, on one condition. There is my resignation of the command of the *Talisman* and of the service of Colombia. Accept and sign it, and I will hail a boat to take you off, but you must decide quickly, for we are already moving through the water."

There was no help for it. The dread of being carried away; the thought that his colleagues would have the handling, and the disposal of the rich store on board the *Talisman*; the idea that during his prolonged absence the Government might be upset, and that not only his wealth, but his position, would be lost; all these reasons induced him to accept the condition imposed. He signed, and then sullenly awaited the arrival of the boat.

There was no great delay, for the piroga had approached the *Talisman* so close as to be nearly within hail. On the arrival of the boat, the Admiral took his seat without a word, but no sooner was he within call of the *Talisman* than he shouted "Que carguen las piezas, que hagan fuego" (to load the guns and fire).

Directly he had reached the ship, the men were called to quarters, and there was a great deal of noise and excitement, but the only result was that a few musket shots were fired in the direction of the piroga,

which fell short, as she had wore round and was gliding away smoothly on her course.

"But, grandfather, why did not they fire?" was a question that I put.

"Well, my boy, I fancy that somehow the guns had got spiked!"

This was the only explanation he ever gave me, but I formed an opinion of my own, as to how the guns "got spiked." A man, as old as the Captain, kept a public-house on the Hard at Portsmouth, much frequented by sailors, and called "The Rover." He was in good circumstances, and frequently called at our house, where, in the evening, the two old men would smoke their pipes and drink their grog. Invariably, as he rose to take his leave, my grandfather said, "Wait a moment, Job, and drive in the other spike before you go!"

They then chuckled, and Job had another glass; and I came to connect Job with the boatswain who touched his hat to the captain of the *Talisman*, and informed him that "all was right" when his superior officer went over her side for the last time. I could not help thinking that the loud applause and clink of glasses in the cuddy below, as the Admiral and commissioners drank their toasts, deadened the sound of hammer and nails on the deck above. But it is purely a surmise, for my inquiries about Job's career were always met by the reply that "he was an old sailor who had done good service to the king."

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As to the conclusion of the story of the wreck, the Commodore was very reticent. I know that *El Descubridor* reached in safety one of the English islands of the West Indies, and that he either realized there the value of his share of the treasure, or brought it to England. But what that value amounted to he never told me, nor even after his death could I form any accurate opinion. For although he made me his heir, a considerable portion of his property had come to him by inheritance, and another part he must have possessed prior to the incident of the bank, as proved by the date of his investments.

Thrown completely together, I pondered with him over the old stories of hidden treasures, over cuttings from newspapers that he had collected concerning lost and missing ships, and studied the charts on which he had marked the different spots at which vessels had gone to the bottom, or to which, as he proved to his own satisfaction, they must have drifted with the winds and tides; and I became as thoroughly imbued with the spirit of discovery as he had been, when serving in the Caribbean Sea.

After his death I went to College, and in course of time was called to the Bar. My library, however, consisted chiefly of my grandfather's books of travel, to which I added many others of a similar description; my friends were few, and they looked upon me as a man with a hobby, and perhaps a little mad. That hobby led me into several useless and expensive

expeditions. Twice I invested largely in companies, formed for the recovery of treasure supposed to exist in galleons lying at the bottom of the harbour of Vigo; and in the result, there were brought to the surface, for the benefit of the shareholders, two antique cannons. At my own expense I fitted out a small vessel, and sailed in it to the Canaries, on a similar voyage of treasure-seeking, and was rewarded by finding numerous shackles such as had been employed in the slave trade.

It was not the love of money that led me on, for I had all that I wanted and to spare; it was simply an insatiate desire to discover a treasure, and I believe that the finding of even a score of ducats would have contented me; but I had already turned forty before I was enriched to the extent of a single dollar, as the result of my long inquiries and arduous researches.

CHAPTER IV.

AN INCIDENT OF THE PARAGUAYAN WAR.

MRS. RAYNE, the widowed mother of my old school-fellow Charley, and our next-door neighbour at Southsea, had been, as I have said, an intimate friend of my grandfather, and after his death had maintained an intermittent correspondence with myself.

I used to pass a week about every two years at the old place, and if I did not reside at her house, I visited her daily during my stay.

On my return from an unsuccessful voyage to Brazil, where my prevailing weakness, to call it by no other name, had led me; I found at my banker's, among other letters which had accumulated (for I never had them forwarded), one from Mrs. Rayne, informing me that Charley was with her, very ill, but very anxious to see me, and inviting me to stay with them during the Goodwood week. That year's Goodwood was already a matter of history when I arrived in London in November, but I hastened to reply, and to inquire whether a visit would still be convenient.

I anxiously awaited the answer, for I did not know what turn Charley's illness might have taken, or even whether he was still living.

In the course of the next day the invitation was cordially renewed, and Mrs. Rayne wrote that her son was a confirmed invalid, but not worse than when he returned home.

Charley, as a schoolfellow, had been a tall blue-eyed lad, with short dark brown curly hair—a lad with well-defined features: a straight, thin, and somewhat prominent nose, with a short upper lip; a very fair complexion, that the sun used to freckle—a fact that was noticed by his school-chums, who said that he changed like a woman, and, with a very mistaken idea as to the stability of that sex, dubbed him “Fanny.” The *Charley* that I now met, after years of separation, had outgrown his Fannyhood; he stood six feet in height, and the lower part of his face was covered with a long curly brown beard, soft but thick, topped by a long moustache, which served to reduce the prominence of his nose. The fairness of his complexion had completely disappeared; exposure to the sun had tinted it to some extent, but it was illness that had changed it to a dull leaden hue.

He was certainly very ill; he stooped as he walked, and the slightest exertion brought on a hard fit of coughing. I jumped at once to the conclusion that the baneful disease, called by the generic name of consumption, was wearing his life away; but in the

evening a short conversation with him proved that I had been hasty, although not totally in error.

Rayne at nineteen had joined a light cavalry regiment, and had seen a good deal of active service in India. He had already got his troop, and was expecting another step, when an accident rendered him unfit for further service. He had charged five barrels of a revolver, and unwisely held the sixth cartridge in his mouth ready to put it into the last empty one, when by some casualty a barrel went off close to his face. Naturally he threw his head back, and in doing so the cartridge slipped from his teeth, and went down his throat. At first it caused but little inconvenience, but gradually commenced to give great trouble. He had the best of advice, but surgeons could do but little, and at last they told him that the bullet had settled in the lungs, and that his remaining in the service was impossible. No one said that his case was hopeless, but they told him that any great exertion might be fatal, and that if he wished to live he must give up all active employment, and consider, before everything, the questions of climate and diet. Charley by no means despaired; restless nights, during which he passed hours in fits of coughing, weakened and depressed him, but he said to me, "I have still got strength to cough, and it is the bullet against a blood-vessel, either the one will give way, or the other will burst." His mother was less hopeful; she had parted with her son, when he was ordered on active service,

a strong healthy man, and he returned to her broken-down, and incapable of the slightest exertion.

"The doctors tell me," she said, "that he ought to leave England at once to avoid all chance of getting cold, and to breathe purer air. He has been talking of going alone to the Nile, but I cannot separate from him so soon after his return, and it has been agreed that for this winter we shall go to Nice. But next year, if he is strong enough, he is to start on a long sea voyage; and, Arthur, I hardly know how to ask you to do it, but I have thought that perhaps you would make a sacrifice and accompany him. You go abroad every year; have you made any plans for this next one?"

"Well, yes, Mrs. Rayne," I replied, "I did intend to go to Paraguay, but I will willingly take Charley wherever the doctors may recommend."

"Paraguay!" she said. "I think I have heard of the country, but I do not know where it is. Is it in Africa? Is it very far away?"

"No; it is in South America, about thirty days from home, and in easy communication by post and telegraph."

"And why are you going there?"

I had become cautious about airing my hobby before everyone, and I answered in terms to satisfy her without betraying my object.

"I have never been there, but I am told that it is a fine country for sport."

"Oh, for sport; I did not know that you were such

an ardent sportsman. If Charley was strong enough, it would be exactly suited to him, but what sort of a climate is it?"

"Well, Mrs. Rayne, at present I know very little about it, but I am going to make inquiries. If the report should prove satisfactory, and Charley returns home well enough to undertake a long journey, we can consider the matter again; but meanwhile be assured that I shall be glad to accompany him wherever he may be recommended to go."

"Thank you, Arthur; he will not let me go with him, but I shall rest contented if you are by his side to care for him."

So we parted, and that evening Charley and I had a long talk.

"Paraguay!" he said, after I had mentioned to him my proposed destination in the ensuing year. "I have heard of that country. There was a man in my regiment, whose sisters had put their money in a Paraguayan loan, and as they got no interest, he had to give them a big slice out of his pay."

"I know very little about it at present," I said, "but I have reason to think that there are treasures hidden away in Paraguay, sufficient to pay off very heavy loans."

"Whew!" and Charley tried a sarcastic whistle, which brought on a fit of coughing. When he recovered he went on:

"I have heard of this before, I don't want to offend

you, old fellow ; but—what shall I call it, this craze, this treasure-hunting mania of yours—I only hope that some day you will be a second Monte Christo. And so you are again on that lay !”

“ Yes,” I said, “ and this time I think with very good prospects of success, if I can only find a man for whom I am seeking.”

“ And who is the individual ?” he inquired. “ Tell me all about it.”

“ On board the Mail, when I was coming home the other day from Brazil,” I replied, “ there was an old Scotchman, who for many years had been settled in Corrientes, a province of the Argentine Confederation, which is separated from Paraguay by a river called the Alto, or Upper, Parana. He was an *estanciero*, a word which corresponds to the “ *ranchero*” of Mexico or Texas, that is to say, the owner of a cattle-breeding estate. He had been fairly successful, and, after many years absence, had determined to revisit his birthplace. We chummed, for he interested me greatly, and many incidents of his life in the Pampas were highly entertaining.

Something or other struck the key-note, and, as usual, I got on to my old hobby-horse.

“ Ah,” he said, “ you should go to Paraguay. Why during the war the people buried everything they possessed, and I knew a man who had seen millions of dollars stowed away under the ground.”

“ And who was he ?” I asked.

“Well, one night I was sitting there alone in the rancho, when I heard the dogs bark. It was the night of Santa Rosa de Lima—she’s the patron saint of South America, but I never knew her festival come round without a storm, and that day, in 1870, there had been a terrific one. It was still blowing hard and raining fast, when I stepped outside, and could well understand the dogs barking. A few yards from the doorway two men were standing; they had come on foot, which is a very rare occurrence in that part of the world, where even a beggar rides, and of itself enough to make any dogs bark, and I wonder they had not been torn to pieces. But, somehow, they didn’t seem afraid of the beasts that only stood round them and bayed. It was no time to ask questions in the open air, so I showed them into the hut that served as a kitchen, and told them to sit down. The *candil*, or lamp of grease, threw a half-light over the place, and by it I saw that my two visitors were in a deplorable condition. The elder was a man of about forty, who in full health must have stood nearly six feet and been well set up, but, as he sat shivering over the fire, he appeared thoroughly broken down, and nearly starving. His black hair and beard were unnaturally long, tangled, and unkempt, and his clothing a mass of rags. A handkerchief was tied round his head *gaucho* fashion, and a blue blouse, one sleeve of which was missing, covered the upper part of his body, while his lower

limbs were encased in a *chiripih*, a sort of shawl, fastened round the waist, and falling in not ungraceful folds between the legs, something like Turkish trousers. In his case, however, it was so worn and diminutive in size that it hardly served for purposes of decency. But notwithstanding his miserable appearance, he had all the bearing of a gentleman, and I noticed that on his left shoulder was the remnant of a *galon*, or strap of gold lace. I came at once to the conclusion that he was a Paraguayan officer, and found a confirmation of this supposition when I turned to his companion, a lad of twenty, dressed in the remnants of a shirt and pair of drawers, whose features showed him to belong to the great Guarani tribe, the largest Indian family of South America.

"I asked no questions, but I offered cigarettes to the new comers, and my *capataz*, or foreman, who was seated at the fireside, handed to the elder of the two a *maté*, a small gourd filled with *yerba*, or Paraguayan tea, which he at once commenced to draw up through the *bombilla*; but I noticed that more than once his eyes wandered to the *olla*, a great iron three-legged pot for cooking food, which stood at the side of the hearth.

" 'Is there anything in the 'olla,' I asked the *capataz*.

" 'Si, señor, hay puchero frio.' That is to say, it contains cold boiled meat, the usual food at supper-time.

“ ‘Put it on the fire,’ I replied.

“The stranger then spoke for the first time, and in good Spanish said :

“ ‘By your leave, señor, we will eat it as it is, and not wait until it is made hot.’

“I bowed, and pushed the pot over to him. From his waist-band he took a long knife, and on its point drew from the olla a piece of meat. There was a sudden gleam of pleasure in his eyes, and, then I realized how terribly hungry the man was, and I felt ashamed at having delayed offering him food, even for a few minutes ; but, before he commenced to eat, he spoke to his boy in a language that I did not understand, and the lad also drew a knife, and followed his master’s example. I left them to themselves and went to my own house, whence, in half an hour, I returned with a mug of *caña*, or native rum. He accepted it politely, and also took a cigarette, and then I thought that courtesy obliged me to open a conversation. So I said, ‘I fancy that you are Paraguayans, is that so?’

“ ‘That boy is Paraguayan,’ he replied.

“ ‘And you?’

“ ‘I am not a Paraguayan.’

“His curt reply somewhat nettled me and I said, ‘Even if you were, you have nothing to fear here ; the war is over, and it would not matter to me if fighting was still going on, for I am an English subject, and have nothing to do with it.’

“ ‘And so am I,’ he said, quietly, in English.

“‘Indeed,’ I replied in the same language. ‘I am sorry you did not mention it earlier, as I would have shown you greater attention ; I took you for escaped prisoners or deserters.

“‘That is really what we are,’ he said, ‘and no apology or excuse is necessary, for you have given us food and drink, which was all that we wanted.’

“‘Well,’ I replied, ‘you must also let me give you a bed. Will you come up to my own rooms?’

“‘With pleasure, but let me first speak to Pepe.’

“He gave him some instructions in the same tongue that he had used before, and then rose to accompany me. I took him to my room, put cigars and a bottle of Carlon wine upon the table, and we sat down and smoked for some time in silence. He was the first to break it.

“‘I told you just now,’ he said, ‘that I was a deserter. It is an ugly name for anyone to give himself, and especially ugly for an Englishman ; but I will tell you briefly what occurred, and you can then decide whether there are any extenuating circumstances.’ He drank a glass of wine, puffed hard for a few seconds, and then went on : ‘During this long five years’ war between the Allies and Paraguay, which you say has ended, all foreigners in the latter country were obliged to lend their services and fight the common enemy. I do not say that I was forced into the ranks, but, I was clearly given to understand that the Dictator did not recognize any nationality except the

Paraguayan, and that native and stranger must serve alike.'

" 'So when my time came I had to go, and I was more fortunate than many of my countrymen, for Skinner, Stewart, and Fox, who were medical men, Thompson, Valpy, Burrell, and Nesbit, who were civil engineers, and many others, served from the very commencement, while I was not called upon until two years ago, when, after residing for some time in the country, I suddenly found myself appointed a lieutenant of cavalry, and was present at the action of Itarora.

" 'I presume that I did my duty, for I was promoted to the rank of captain, and not long afterwards to a majority—a rank not usually granted, for Lopez seldom gave any rewards beyond the Order of Merit for distinguished bravery. Those officers who did excellent service were satisfied with a decoration made of lead, while those who failed were quickly snuffed out, sometimes shot, and sometimes only reduced to the ranks.

" 'I followed him in his long retreat northwards in search of some means of escape. I was present at most of the actions that took place, in which we were generally overpowered by numbers and suffered terrible losses, and I should have still followed him, and probably died in his defence on the Aquidaban, where I have been told that he died, had not his brutal conduct disgusted me, and driven me to desert a commander, even at the time of his greatest necessity.

“The more I had seen of Paraguayans, the more I liked them, but to one family I was especially indebted, and father, mother, and children were all endeared to me.

“In days of peace and quietude, before the war broke out, they had been my nearest neighbours. The husband had held out a helping hand when I first started in business, and the wife had nursed me with a sister’s care, through a long and painful illness.

“They were people of high standing in that republican, and almost communistic country, and they were also of superior education. He had passed several years in France, and she was a Porteña, a native of Buenos Ayres, the most cultivated, and civilized city, of South America. There were many things in common between us, and we became most intimate; a day seldom went by without our meeting, and although I had a house of my own, I passed all my spare time in theirs.

“Then came the war, and my friend was among the first to present himself at Asuncion, and place his services at the Dictator’s disposal. He received a high command, and served all through the war. During the whole time there was never a doubt about his loyalty; the President’s own relatives were suspected, and some of them were thrown into prison, and it is said suffered still greater trials; but the name of Don Valentin was never connected with any of

the plots or conspiracies, which, according to public report, were frequently concocted against Lopez. The very last order that he received was a proof of the Marshal's faith and confidence in his old servant. When driven far north—when faced and flanked by his foes, and chased by Brazilian cavalry ; when every hope of escape seemed to have died away—Lopez determined to bury the treasure that he had brought with him over the long weary march, from his fourth and last seat of Government at Caraguatahy, and my old friend was appointed to the command of a working party to effect the burial, because his chief reposed greater trust in him than in any other officer.'

"My visitor stopped, filled his glass and drank it off, then smoked for some minutes, before continuing his narrative.

"'Except to one person—Don Valentin's wife—I have never mentioned his death, and to her I only told half the story of how he died.

"'It is so painful that I cannot relate all the details as I heard them, and actually witnessed some of them, but now that I have gone so far, I will tell you the end.

"'With three troopers I had been out scouting, some miles away from the main body of Lopez's retreating force. Towards sunset we closed on to the line of march, and had proceeded a short distance, when I noticed the marks of cart-wheels diverging from the road.

“We followed them, for my instructions were to see that nothing remained behind the column, and at the distance of about half a mile we came upon two carts, both of which bore, in large white letters, the inscription “*Tesorería General de la Nación.*” These I recognised at once as the vehicles that we had guarded so carefully since we commenced the march northwards, but a slight inspection showed them to be empty. We hastened forward, following a trail evidently made by infantry, and before long reached a spot where the ground had recently been disturbed. My conclusion naturally was that the contents of the carts had been buried there, and probably my troopers thought the same, but they were too well trained to criticise, or pass any comments on the acts of “El Supremo” as the Dictator was called.

“Without a word we continued our journey, and followed the trail, which now turned again in the direction of the main road.

“I judged that we must fall very quickly on the line of march, when suddenly the narrow lane that we were following opened out on to an open space of considerable area, in the middle of which our gaze fell upon a number of human bodies lying on the ground.

“We approached cautiously with our arms prepared for an emergency, but we soon saw that we should have no occasion to use them, for a glance sufficed to

show to men who had witnessed many a battlefield that we were looking upon the corpses of our fellow-soldiers, around which a number of birds of prey were already hovering.

“‘ They were lying, with two or three exceptions, on their faces, in an irregular line, and in front of several of them, as though suddenly jerked from their hands, were their rifles and working tools. We quickly dismounted at the left of the line, and my troopers examined the first body. One of them exclaimed, “Don Luis !” and I half recognised the features of an Italian engineer with whom I had once or twice come into contact ; but I hastily turned away in horror and disgust, for across his throat there was a frightful gash. Probably before that terrible wound had been inflicted, the man was dead, for in his back were the holes of no less than three bullets.

“‘ I passed quickly along the line, and in every body I saw similar wounds in the back, excepting in one or two, who in the death agony had turned their faces to the sky ; and on their throats there was that ghastly wound that haunts me to this day. On the right of the line, I recognised by his dress an officer. He was lying on his face, his sword but two or three inches in front of him, as though he had fallen in the very act of saluting.

“‘ I touched the body, and found it still warm. I turned it over, and my eyes met those of my friend Valentin. He was living, but helpless. His right

shoulder-bone was shattered, and from the left side his blood was oozing. Happily his throat was untouched. I called Pepe, that boy who is with me, to my assistance, and between us we bound up his wounds as well as we could. Of the fourteen who were lying in that line, Valentin was the only one living; all the others were beyond human aid. Probably they had been killed with bullets, but to make doubly sure their throats had been cut with a barbarity, that I had never before met in Paraguay. Of the faithful followers who still stood by their master in his sorest need, Francisco Solano Lopez, El Supremo! El Dictador! had selected my unfortunate friend, as the truest and most loyal of all the band, for the duty of placing in safe hiding the enormous wealth that he hoped some day to recover, and to enjoy, either as the re-instated chief of the country, or as an exile in a foreign land, and, in order to preserve his secret, he had caused this gallant officer, and every man who had been employed in the working party, to be shot in the back, in the way that he would have executed the very blackest traitor.

“ ‘He coolly murdered them, and yet his secret lives, and is here, here, in this belt, with the few gold pieces that I have preserved to carry me home.

“ ‘His landmarks are destroyed, the very face of the country is changed, and, except Pepe and myself, no

living soul can point out the spot where the treasure of Paraguay lies hidden.'

"He took two or three hasty strides across the room, and then turning to me he said, 'Don Juan, you kindly offered me a bed. Will you crown your hospitality by allowing me to make use of it?'

"I showed him his room, and asked him to make use of some clothing that I had had placed for him. and with a *buenas noches* I left him.

"According to habit, I was a-foot by daylight the next morning, but he and Pepe had both departed. In his room I found written on a piece of cigarette paper these words :—

"'Thanks for your great kindness, and for the clothes that I have taken. I dread to meet you, lest any reference should be made to last night's conversation, which raked up painful recollections, and so I leave without saying, "adios."—Yours gratefully, DON FELIX.'

CHAPTER V.

DON FELIX.

"WELL," said Charley, "that is a nasty story, and if it is true, Lopez was not a very pleasant man to have for a chief. But do you mean to say that you are going to seek for this treasure. Why, man, I never heard of such a wild-goose chase. Why, all this must have happened eight or ten years ago, and do you suppose it's still lying there? Don Felix and Pepe are the only men who know the spot! That is nonsense, for Lopez must have known, and will have told some friend or relation; but even if not, why should not Don Felix have returned to the place, and dug it up? or why should not Pepe have sold the secret? Besides I dare say all South America is alike, and there may have been an earthquake or a thousand things."

I let him run on until, for want of breath, he was obliged to stop, and then I replied:

"I have never said that I was going to start at once in search of this treasure, and if you will listen to me for a moment, I will tell you what I propose to do.

I am going to hunt up Don Felix, and get direct from him the story, instead of only knowing it, as I do now, at secondhand. If there is anything in it, then there will be time enough to think about the next steps, and meanwhile you can go away quietly, and try to get better. If on your return you are well enough to undertake a long journey, and I can satisfy you that there is something in my craze, as you call it, then I do not see why we should not go to Paraguay as well as to any other country."

"There is something in that," said Rayne. "Anyhow, I like to have an object in view, and your treasure will serve as the goal at the end of the voyage."

So it was settled, and in a day or two we parted, Mrs. Rayne and her son leaving for the south of France, while I went back to London.

I was like Charley, and should have been excessively dull if I had not had an object in view. That object was Don Felix, but the chase was so long and wearisome, that sometimes I despaired of finding him.

I inquired at the Foreign Office, and was informed that there was no English Consul in Paraguay, nor Paraguayan representative in London. I was referred to a firm of merchants in the City who had had dealings with that country, but they knew nothing of Don Felix. They mentioned, however, other parties who might give me information, and I sought them out, but they could not tell me anything. A notice appeared in the London papers requesting Don Felix,

late of Paraguay, to send his address to the advertiser but, although it was repeated a dozen times, it brought no answer. Time was passing rapidly ; Charley would be back next month, and I was no further advanced than when he left. One day I drove to my solicitors. I did so with a good deal of hesitation, for even to them I hardly cared to explain the purpose I had in view in searching for Don Felix.

They had acted formerly for my grandfather, and I think they considered that I was hardly to be entrusted with the charge of the property I had inherited from him. Certainly they had expressed their disapproval of some ventures that I had made. Still I went to them, and had an interview with the senior partner. I told my story, and, after a few minutes' thought, he said, "Well, Mr. Penistone, it is clear you will never rest satisfied until you find Don Felix, or learn that no such person exists. Half measures are of no use. You have been advertising on the supposition that he is residing in London, or in its neighbourhood ; but he may be in some distant part of England, or in Scotland, Ireland, or Wales. Try an advertisement in what are called the leading provincial papers, and give our address for any answers. People give attention to a notice inserted by a firm of solicitors, and other solicitors look to see whether the person wanted is among their clients."

I accepted this recommendation, and gave *carte*

blanche for the advertising; but for days nothing came of it.

My correspondence was never large, but one morning in March I found two letters on the breakfast table. The one I first opened was from Mrs. Rayne, to tell me that they had just returned home, and that Charley had certainly gained strength, and that he suffered less from fits of coughing. The other was from my solicitors, and referred me to a letter of which they enclosed a copy, which was to this effect:—

“Edinburgh, March, 1880.

“Dear Sirs,

‘Don Felix, late of Paraguay.’

“We had reason to believe that the gentleman referred to in the notice commencing as above, which appeared recently in the *Elgin Courier*, is a client of our own, and we, therefore, directed his attention to it. In reply, he confirms our supposition, and instructs us to enquire the nature of the business for which an interview with him is requested.

“We are, &c., &c.”

The advice of my solicitors was, that it would be better to state the truth outright, namely, that I wanted information regarding a treasure supposed to exist in Paraguay. This they did, and after the lapse of a few days they informed me that the gentleman whom I was seeking would be in Edinburgh on that day week, and would meet me by appointment at his solicitors'. No name was given, and he was only referred to as “our client.”

My next step was to run down and see Charley, and induce him to accompany me. I was very pleased

to find that he was greatly improved in appearance, and also that his spirits were higher, and that his gloomy views had, in a great measure, disappeared. He seemed to take an interest in my account, and became as anxious to meet Don Felix as I was myself. We travelled to Edinburgh, and at once announced our arrival to the solicitors of Don Felix. The messenger brought a reply, making an appointment for eleven o'clock the next day.

I passed a sleepless night. The constant strain that had been going on for some months had told upon me, and now that I was within reach of the interview, for which I had been so long seeking, there was a reaction. If I closed my eyes there at once appeared before me an imaginary picture of fourteen lifeless bodies, stretched on a grassy plain, in the midst of gigantic trees, on which were sitting, ready to swoop down, numerous birds of prey, just as Don Juan had recounted the story told to him. I rose in the morning nervous and unrefreshed, but found Charley just the reverse. The air of the Scotch capital seemed to brace him. He talked all the morning about Paraguay and Don Felix. He already discussed the question of the guns that he should take on the proposed expedition, and he was impatient until the moment for our departure arrived.

We sent in our cards and found that we were expected, for a stately old gentleman received us at

once, and inquired which was Mr. Penistone. I bowed, and he informed us that his client was in the next room.

We followed him, and he introduced : Mr. Penistone, Captain Rayne—Mr. Wilfrid Willis. In this gentleman, who rose and bowed, I recognised the Don Felix, of whom my fellow-passenger, Don Juan, had spoken, greatly changed in many respects, but still retaining the chief characteristics. His clothing of rags had given place to a suit of dark tweed ; his black hair, now tinged with grey, was cut short, and his beard though still long, was neatly trimmed. The look of hunger had disappeared from his eyes, but in them there still remained one of distrust, I might almost say, of suspicion.

He stood at least six feet in height, and was a broad-shouldered powerful man. I think most people would have called him handsome, but there was a fierceness in his whole bearing that would have prevented strangers from volunteering their friendship.

He pointed to chairs, and turning to me he said in a sharp abrupt manner, but speaking with a clear and not unpleasant voice, " May I ask who spoke to you about me, and about the treasure you mention in your letter ? "

" It was a Mr. John Patterson, a gentleman with whom I travelled home from Brazil," I replied.

" I never heard his name ; who is he ? "

" He was an estanciero, of Corrientes, in whose house you slept one night."

"Ah ! I beg pardon, I remember, Don Juan, el Ingles. Yes, he was very kind to me ; is he at home ? I should like to thank him."

"Yes ; he is in Scotland, and I can find you his address, but you have already thanked him in a letter signed 'Don Felix.'"

"Ah ! I remember having to leave without 'beat of drum.' I did not wish to be stopped either by the Brazilians or Argentines. Up to that time I had escaped them, and after leaving Don Juan's I managed to get on board an English gunboat, and so avoided being made prisoner and detained."

"But surely you ran more risk under your Paraguayan name than under your own ; why did you hide that ?"

"Because I did not wish to connect the life I had led in Paraguay with that I was about to follow in England ; but, as a matter of fact, Felix is only a corruption of Willis. There is no 'w' in Spanish, and the natives could not manage my Christian name, Wilfrid, in any way, but Willis they turned into 'Ooillis,' and in a short time they further reduced that to 'Feliz,' or 'Felix.'"

"Well, Mr. Willis," broke in Charley, "it does not much matter what name you may choose to bear, but you are evidently the gentleman whom Penistone has been seeking for some time, and now that we have found you, will you give us any information about the treasure that you saw buried ?"

"Who says that I saw it buried? I have never said so!" replied, excitedly, Mr. Willis.

"No! that is true; Captain Rayne is going too far," I answered, trying to calm down his rising temper. "You have merely seen a place where the earth had been recently disturbed, and where you supposed that the contents of the carts had been deposited. Will you tell us what your idea is as to those contents? Were they of value? Was there, in fact, any treasure?"

"All that I know," he answered almost sullenly, "is from hearsay, but my informant was a man in whom I had every faith, who, when he related what had occurred, knew that he was very dangerously wounded, if not actually dying, and who had no reason for misleading me."

"You refer to Don Valentin," said Charley.

I had noticed that although when Charley last spoke his statement had been quickly rebutted, yet Mr. Willis appeared to regard him with a much more friendly eye than he did me, and to treat him with greater courtesy, and I determined to leave to him as much as possible the conduct of the inquiry we were making.

"Yes, to my old friend Valentin," he answered. "He lived for three days after he was wounded, and at last died in my arms. At first I had hopes of his recovery; he was a man of strong constitution, and, like all Paraguayans, capable of bearing a great deal

of suffering ; when his wounds had been bound up, and he had been made as comfortable as circumstances would permit, his speech soon came back, and he gave me instructions as to his wife and children, and charged me to bear to them his last wishes.

"The next day he seemed still better, and then he gave me all the details of the important duty that he had fulfilled in accordance with Lopez's orders, and of the reward that he had received. But," he said, turning to me, "I cannot remember how much of the story I related to Don Juan. Will you tell me what he has told you?"

I briefly stated what I had heard, and he went on :

"Yes ; that seems all right. At the very spot where I had noticed that the cart-track diverged from the main road, he had been met by the Dictator, and ordered to take a party of twenty men, and escort the treasury to a place where he would find the engineer, Don Luis. He was then to send forward the bullocks and bullock-drivers, under escort to join the main body, while he was to remain, and place himself, with the remainder of his party, under the orders of Don Luis.

"He reached the place, where I afterwards found the carts, shortly after receiving the order, and there met Don Luis, who, sketch-book in hand, was engaged in marking on it some of the most prominent landmarks of the open plain that stretched before him

The escort, with the bullocks, was dismissed, and Valentin was asked to let his remaining twelve men open the ground at a spot which Don Luis had already selected. While his people were so engaged, Valentin closely watched Don Luis. But I think it will make my story all the clearer if I give you a translation from the Spanish language, in which my friend gave me the history of what followed as nearly as I can remember it in his own words :

“We were standing,” he said, “under a magnificent ombú, which threw a most agreeable shade, at a distance of about two hundred yards from where the men were at work. Right in front of me, and across them, I noticed several similar trees following one another almost in a straight line until they became lost in the forest on the far side of the plain. To my left, across the open space, there seemed to be habitations, for among the foliage I could see distinctly one rancho, and caught a glimpse of the thatched roof of a second ; but to the right, there was nothing but a long stretch of pampa grass, until my gaze again met the belt of forest, from which a clump of trees stood out prominently. I had, however, but little time for continuing my observation, for Don Luis said :

“‘Major, can you count a horse’s paces at the gallop?’

“‘Oh, yes,’ I replied.

“‘Then do me the favour to mount my horse, and

tell me the distance between that rancho,' pointing to the house on our left, 'and the working-party.'

"I unhitched the horse, and was in the act of mounting, when he added, giving me a string of beads :

" 'Take this rosario, and pass a bead for every fifty paces ; you will find that the easier method.'

"I obeyed, and started at the gentle canter to which pampa horses are accustomed. I counted during the short journey eight beads and a few odd paces. The rancho I found to be uninhabited, and in a ruinous condition ; one glance showed me that it must have been the hut of a *vaquero*, or cowherd, for on one side was situated a small *corral*, or enclosure for shutting in cattle. On my return I again counted the beads, and on reaching Don Luis showed him the number that I had separated from the remainder on the string.

"He made an entry on his sketching-block, and then pointing to the clump of trees on the right, he asked me to estimate the distance to one of them which stood out taller than its fellows, and added :

" 'Will you take this machete, and mark it plainly,' handing to me at the same time a short cutlass, which is used alike for agricultural and warlike purposes.

"I rode to the tree, marked it well with a big cross, cut deep into the bark, and returning, I showed Don Luis the beads that I had separated, amounting again to eight.

“‘That will do,’ he said; ‘I thought I had hit the middle point. Will you now give me the position of that ombú, and I think we shall have all the necessary bearings.’

“The ombú was one of the line of trees in front of us, that I have already mentioned, and it stood at nearly the same distance from my starting place. I returned, and reported to Don Luis, who filled in the distance, and then handed me his sketch.

“‘The General’s instructions to me,’ he said, ‘were to give the bearings, so that the spot may be found at any time by him, but without giving any details which could afford information to strangers. Do you think, Major, that these are sufficient?’

“‘I should have said,’ I replied, ‘that mid-way between the rancho and that clump of trees would have marked the place without any other measurement.’

“‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘that is true, but a rancho will not last for ever, while the trees will stand for years, and so, even if the “tapera” should be destroyed, anyone with this sketch in his hand will find this place by the marks that we have made on the trees.

“By this time the working party had nearly finished. They had made a hole five feet square by six in depth, and by the engineer’s instructions they removed the doors from one of the carts and laid them at the bottom.

“The contents were then brought out of the carts

—five heavy boxes, one of them much larger than the others. One box was very badly made, and of very thin wood; probably it had been hastily constructed in the hurried departure from Caraguatahy, but my men did not notice the fact, and were not so careful as they should have been. Anyhow, it fell to pieces when they were placing it in the hole, and out tumbled a medley of women's ornaments—necklets, combs, and bracelets, mixed with dollars, onzas, and even sovereigns. As well as we could, we collected all the valuables again, but the box was useless, and the only thing that we could find to hold them was an old terció, or bag of hide, for holding yerba, which we discovered in one of the carts.

“On the top of the cases, by order of Don Luis, we placed two more of the cart doors, and then, as quickly as possible, we shovelled in the earth and stamped it down. Our work was completed, the men collected their arms and tools, formed up, and away we marched to rejoin the main body.

“Our way was through a thick wood, but after proceeding about half a mile we came upon a small open space, over which a group of soldiers was scattered. They formed up as we approached, and we then saw that they were part of the Dictator's body-guard, and in a few seconds the Dictator himself appeared on horseback, accompanied by two aides-de-camp. We exchanged a few words of salutation with the men of the guard as we passed, and halted about

twenty paces in front of them. Don Luis rode up to the General and dismounted, an orderly taking his horse. Lopez also dismounted, and for some time the two walked up and down on our left flank, discussing the rough sketch that the engineer had made. They then came to the place where I was standing, and the General, addressing me in the second person singular, as he often did when in a good temper, said, 'Estoy satisfecho ; mas que has hecho con los carros ?' (I am satisfied, but what have you done with the carts?) I replied that they had been left, where I had found them.

"A frown came over his face, but he only said, 'Nada importa' (It does not matter), and then passed down the line, followed by Don Luis, and speaking a word, here and there, to some of my men whom he recognised. He left Don Luis at the end of our line, and went towards the horses. After he had mounted and just cleared our flank, he turned in his saddle and held up his left hand as a sign to his body-guard. We were all watching him, and the idea of treachery had never entered my mind, or that of my companions, but that movement of his arm was our death sentence. It was followed by a volley, and I had not even time to turn my head, and see whence it came, when I felt myself struck in two places, and fell forward on my face. The next thing that I remember was someone holding up my head. I looked up, and saw bending close over me the face of a friend, but in his hand

he held a long knife, and I knew then, that my hour had come. With what I supposed would be my last breath I murmured 'Que! vos Xavier!' words of reproach to a comrade, to whom I had shown many acts of kindness. He seemed to feel them, for he dropped my head gently and said, 'No puedo; no se mueve' (I cannot do it; do not move).

"I know nothing more of what happened," he concluded, "until I found myself supported by your arms."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEATH OF VALENTIN.

"THE connected story," said Don Felix, as I will still call him, "that I have told you, as narrated to me by Valentin, only came by fits and starts during the days and nights that we tended him, in the hope of saving his life. When I first discovered him alive, my intention was to comply with the General's orders, and join the main body, taking with me my old friend ; but on mentioning this to Valentin, he started and almost sat upright. 'He did it,' he hoarsely whispered ; 'he ordered us to be shot, el traidor ! Leave me here to die !' Then for the first time I realized something of the truth, and turning to the corporal of my small detachment, I said, 'Cabo, you will return to headquarters, and report that I have remained to assist a wounded officer. Pepe will remain to help me, but take the other man with you.' The man did not seem inclined to obey, and handled his carbine in a somewhat threatening manner. Probably he had been attached to me as a spy on my actions, a course that was generally adopted

when an officer was sent on detached duty ; and he answered sullenly, 'Mi mayor, our orders are to return together to headquarters at sunset.' 'I know my duty, Cabo,' I replied, 'without advice from you ; will you obey my orders ?' and I loosened my pistol ready for action. Pepe, with his horse, had separated himself from his companions, and drawn over to my side, and the corporal saw that he was out-matched, for we were two to two, and, moreover, I had a revolver. He therefore thought it better to obey, but he sent a parting shaft, 'Si, mi mayor, I will report to headquarters, and perhaps I may return here with orders from El Supremo.'

"Then he turned his horse and galloped off, followed by the trooper. I knew well what the threat meant, but for myself I did not care. I had determined not to rejoin Lopez, and I could at any time turn back and surrender myself to the Brazilians, who, we supposed, were following us closely ; but I had to think of my disabled comrade and friend.

"With difficulty, and with great pain to him, we managed to get him into the saddle, and holding the horse, I slowly led him away from that fatal spot. Although I wished to put him under a roof, I did not dare to go to the rancho, for that would be the first place to be visited, should a party be sent from headquarters in search of us, but we journeyed in that direction and found, not far from it, a secluded spot suitable for a temporary resting-place. Here we made

a soft bed of leaves and grass, and laid him down as comfortably as we could.

‘He fell into a condition of half-slumber, which was frequently disturbed by painful dreams, for every now and then he muttered words that were unintelligible ; but he was comparatively quiet, and happily did not disarrange the bandages that we had applied.

“Pepe had gone away with the horses, and on his return told me that he had found water and good pasturage, and had hobbled them for the night ; then he proceeded to light a fire, and put on the pot to boil water for a maté with the same method and expedition that he did his work in camp.

“He was a perfect servant, and at the same time a friend. His father had been my mainstay and factotum during the five or six years, that I had resided in the country, and had been engaged in peaceful pursuits, until called upon to render military service. I had embarked my little capital in the purchase of cattle, buying *novillos*, or oxen, two or three years old, in comparatively poor condition, and fattening them for market, the land that I occupied being especially suitable for that purpose, not only on account of its fine pasturage, but also because of the numerous algarrobos, a species of carob or bread-tree, the fruit of which is much sought after by cattle, and is excessively nourishing.

“Pepe’s father, José Irrigoyen, was invaluable for such a business ; he was probably the best judge of

cattle for leagues around. He could pick at sight the animal which gave most promise of fattening quickly. He never failed in his selection of a beast, and he knew the exact time when it would be ready for market.

"Shortly after the commencement of the war he left for headquarters, but he still did me good service, and to him, it was in a great measure owing, that I was permitted to follow my ordinary pursuits for some time longer.

"He was appointed an 'abastecedor,' that is to say, a 'commissary for the supply of cattle to the army,' and he naturally drew his supplies from my stock. At first I received payment in dollars, but there came a time when paper money of purely nominal value, and of very rough manufacture, was declared in 'curso forzoso,' and had to be accepted as a legal tender. Still I continued my supplies, even when paper became scarce, and I had to be satisfied with a 'certificate of delivery,' to be presented at some unfixed date to the Public Treasury; but at last even my cart bullocks had to be surrendered, and shortly afterwards my own services were requisitioned.

"José died early in the war, leaving his son Pepe a well-grown lad of seventeen years of age. He had the light supple figure of a Paraguayan, and a somewhat high cheek-bone showed that there was Guarani blood in his veins, but in other respects he might have been taken for an inhabitant of a more northern clime.

His eyes were blue, and his hair was brown and curly ; his skin was tanned and sunburnt, but, where not exposed to the air, was comparatively of a light colour, and he possessed many of the characteristics of the Basques, the early European settlers in Paraguay, from whom, as his surname would lead one to conjecture, he was probably descended. He inherited the good qualities of his father ; he was honest and faithful, a capital horseman, and, even at sixteen, a very clever judge of cattle. When I marched he followed me, and I succeeded in having him appointed my soldier-servant. In both capacities he was thoroughly efficient ; if fighting was the order of the day, he was in the thick of it ; and when the work was done, he attended to the wants of the horses and of his master, always ready and always willing. When I was wounded he took every care of me, and on two occasions when he was hit, I nursed him as I would have done a son. So, there grew up between us a regard, almost an affection, far beyond that which is usually found between master and servant, however good and forbearing both of them may be. And now I had to call upon him, to do a service which was likely to be accompanied by great risk and danger, and might not improbably end disastrously. Our little fire was burning up, and its warmth was pleasant even in the month of February, for the sun had scarcely penetrated the foliage of a thick wood, such as that in which we had sought a hiding-place, and

even in the height of summer, the evenings in Paraguay, immediately after sunset, became cool and almost chilly.

“Valentin seemed to be sleeping quietly, and I enjoyed so much the quiet and repose, after the excitement of the afternoon, that I hesitated to broach the subject that was weighing on my mind, and endeavoured to interest myself in the process of making *maté*; a process that I had witnessed thousands of times, but which never before then had attracted my attention. Pepe was seated on the *bastos* of his *recado*, the trees of his saddle in fact, but instead of being made of wood or iron, they consisted of two circular leather pillows about three inches in diameter, and perhaps eighteen inches in length, having very much the appearance of large German sausages. Connected by thin cords and placed longitudinally on either side of the horse's spine, they form the foundation of a saddle which is easy and springy, both to the animal and its rider.

“With his legs crossed, he held in his left hand the *mate*, a gourd about the size of a large poppy head, which he half filled, from a little bag at his side, with yerba, a fine powder, of a dark-green colour. On to this he poured a few drops of cold water, and then taking the *bombilla* (a silver tube some six inches in length, at the bottom of which is a short covered spoon, pierced by a number of small holes), he carefully inserted it on one side, in such a manner that

the powder should not clog it. He then filled the gourd with water, so hot that it would have burnt and destroyed the flavour of the yerba, had it not been for the few drops of cold previously applied ; and handed it to me.

"I have heard the qualities of the *Ilex Paraguayensis*, or yerba-maté, (in Guarani, caá mí), discussed by many learned doctors, both at home and abroad, and have been informed that its analysis shows it to contain caffetine, théine, resin, albumen, and I know not what more ; but this I know, that just as the London lady, after a hard day's shopping, yearns for a cup of tea to restore her debilitated powers, and relieve her fatigue, so a Paraguayan, no matter how hard his work, nor how many hours he may have been without food, first turns to his maté. And the Paraguayan yerba is undoubtedly better than the tea of China or Assam. Instead of exciting the nervous system, it calms it ; instead of creating an appetite, it appeases the demand for substantial food ; and to some extent, although to a very small one, it serves as a substitute for salt, which is a necessity for the well-being of man and beast, but which is a scarce luxury in Paraguay.

"I sipped my maté, and, as I imbibed the yerba, I felt my courage return, and I opened my mind to Pepe.

"'What have we got in the haversacks, Pepe ?' I enquired. 'The Major has some charqui and

farifia, and in mine there is chipa. 'Those poor fellows lying there,' and I turned my head in the direction of Valentin's working party, 'must have had their rations; do you think we could get them, for we must find food for him?'

"'Si patron,' he answered, and I noticed that, for the first time, he addressed me in the old form in use at the Estancia, instead of giving me my grade.

"'I have no intention of rejoining head-quarters,' I said, 'and I will tell you why. The man lying there was shot because he knew where the treasure was buried. We have been over the same ground, and if we present ourselves we shall be shot too. Do you understand?'

"'Si, señor, comprendo.'

"'Yes, but there is something more, the Cabo and Eujenio (that was the trooper) will reach the camp about this time, and will report that we have remained behind. Probably a detachment will be sent to search for us, and if we are found you know what the end will be. We must study their movements, and we must be prepared to change our quarters at a moment's notice. It is impossible for me to go, for I must watch by Don Valentin, for the sake of his wife, Doña Mercedes; and besides, I cannot find my way through the forest. Will you risk it?'

"'Si, patron,' he answered, as he stood up erect, 'for Doña Mercedes, I would risk my life.'

"Then we arranged our plans. Pepe was to remain

at the side of Don Valentin, while I went to relieve his working party of some of the poor provisions which they no longer needed.

"I started on my journey over the very ground that we had crossed in the afternoon, following a narrow path that led through lofty trees, which shut out the sky above ; but as I reached the skirt of the forest, I started back in amazement, for the moon was shining in all her brightness over that plain, which earlier in the day had been the scene of a dastardly crime, and there, in full view, were lying the victims.

"I shuddered at the terrible spectacle, and I hesitated for some minutes before I could summon courage to leave the dark shade of the trees.

"It is sad enough to cross the field after a battle has been fought, and to see one's comrades and one's foes lying side by side, but the feeling is less poignant, for the dead have fallen in fair fight, and the survivors have to think of other things ; they are either elated with victory, though it may have been dearly bought, or they are depressed with defeat ; but to stand, as I was now standing, and to see before me the bodies of thirteen men, who had committed no crime, either civil or military, and who indeed had 'done well,' as the General himself had confessed, raised in my mind feelings of hatred and horror. Before I took a step forward I registered a vow, that nothing should ever induce me again to serve under his command, and that if the opportunity should be

given me to make him some return, I would not fail to make use of it. But even, while these thoughts passed through my mind, I trembled at the idea of placing myself in opposition to the despotic will of that man who, had arrogantly, and almost blasphemously, conferred upon himself the title of 'The Supreme.'

"I crossed the open space intervening between the forest and my dead comrades, and reached the spot where Don Luis was lying. In front of him, as though suddenly thrown from his hands, I noticed the white page of his sketching-block gleaming in the moonlight, from which but a few hours before he had removed the leaf, on which had been laid down the bearings of the excavation. I picked it up, why or wherefore I do not know, and threw its strap over my shoulder. Then I made my examination. The haversacks were roughly made of untanned hide, thick and strong, and up to this time they had resisted the attacks of the vultures. I had only to feel them with my hand to know their contents. Those which did not yield to the pressure evidently contained *chipa*, a kind of bread made of mandioca, which soon becomes hard as stone. This would be of no use to my wounded companion, and therefore I did not disturb the contents of the haversack ; but when I came upon one which yielded to my hand, I took it off and slung it round me, for I knew that in it I should find a small supply of *fariña*.

"I completed the painful operation as quickly

as I could, and then hastened to return to our camp.

"Valentin was awake, and had taken two or three maté's that Pepe had handed to him. He was very weak, and could only murmur a few words of recognition as I approached his couch, but he was perfectly sensible.

"I gave my instructions to Pepe, namely, to get as near as he could to the retreating column, which I knew must have encamped within a few miles of our present position, but to keep under cover of the forest and to run no unnecessary risk.

"Before we started we got our supper. During my residence in the country I had made a careful study of the physique of the Paraguayans and of their habits. Their diet is composed almost entirely of cereals and vegetables. Indian corn, mandioca in several forms, sugar-cane, oranges, and maté are the chief articles of consumption, and on them they thrive, and many of them live to great age; but when once stricken by severe illness, or when badly wounded, their chances of pulling through are very few. They have no back-bone—no stamina—and when once pulled down, it is very difficult to pull them up again. There was, besides, a great and pressing want all through the war—namely, the want of *salt*. The mineral has always been scarce in Paraguay; even in times of peace the internal produce from the Salinas and Lambaré was very small, and the greater part of

the supply necessary for the requirements of the population was imported. Both these sources failed shortly after the retreat from Asuncion, and since that date the male and female population had been left without one of the great necessities for the preservation of life.

"In preparing food for Valentin, I considered both these points, and I had the more hope of his constitution because I knew, that both he and his wife, had adopted foreign habits, different to those of Paraguayans in general, and that they were even accustomed to a meat diet; and, moreover, in a corner of my haversack, there still remained a little packet of salt, and a few ounces of *charqui*, or sun-dried beef. In the one pot that we possessed, which on some occasions was used as a kettle, on others as a saucepan, we concocted a puchero, or boiled mess of charqui and farifia, with a small addition of salt, and a chipa, and I was pleased to see the readiness with which Valentin accepted the *caldo*, or broth, that I offered to him. It strengthened and revived him, and for some time after Pepe had left us he was able to converse, and it was then that he told me the incidents that I have related. I found, however, that the recollection excited him, and I did my best to turn his thoughts to other subjects, and to induce him to sleep. He became very feverish as the night wore on, and partially delirious. His mind seemed fixed on that fatal moment when the volley was fired, for the cracking

of a branch caused him almost involuntarily to turn his head over his shoulder, in the endeavour to see what was about to happen.

"So the night passed on. Sometimes Valentin had lucid intervals, and would talk calmly and rationally, and even take a maté or a little broth; and just as the day began to break he fell into a heavy slumber.


"I fancy that I must have slept too, for on rousing myself I found the sun high up, and I at once became anxious about Pepe.

"Valentin was still sleeping, and, while sitting by his side, I took up the sketch-book that on the previous evening I had recovered, almost from the hands of Don Luis. Holding it in his hand when he made his plan, probably he pressed heavily on it, for although the plan itself had been removed, and was in the possession of Lopez, yet on the block that I held before me, there remained a perfect tracing of his drawing. I took the pencil which was inserted in the side of the block, and with it I blackened the lines, and so brought out a facsimile of his sketch. To pass the time I was filling in the surroundings when Pepe returned.


"Here," said Don Felix, taking from his pocket a folded paper, "is the sketch, with the additions that I made."

own on the Sketching block
marked X - Details filled

to escape



Shado
Valentin.



CHAPTER VII.

DON FELIX CONCLUDES HIS STORY.

‘PEPE’S report was quickly made. He had kept within the forest, through which the column had marched, until he came to the neighbourhood of Lopez’s night encampment. He had met neither Paraguayans nor Brazilians, nor had he had reason to suppose that the former had sent out detachments, or that the latter were following the retreating enemy with any speed. He was still watching when the camp was struck at daybreak, but before the troops marched he witnessed a sad spectacle.

“Half a company took up a position in front of the trunk of a tree, and then advanced an escort, in the centre of which were two prisoners, with their arms bound behind their backs, and accompanied by a priest. Pepe had witnessed many such a spectacle before, but this one struck him, for in the prisoners he recognised, even at the distance at which he was stationed, the corporal of my detachment and his own comrade, Eujenio.

“The trunk of the tree served for a ‘banquillo,’ on

which the unfortunate men were placed, with their backs to the firing party ; the officer in command read a sentence, the priest mumbled some words, probably commending their souls to Providence, and as he cleared the front, the squad brought their arms to the ' present : ' a volley followed, and all was over. Their deaths added two more victims to those who had been sacrificed to that fatal treasure.

" Pepe remained until he could no longer see even the dust of the column, and then he found his way back to give me his report.

" I felt satisfied that no attempt would now be made to search for us. Lopez either considered that we were not worth the trouble, or he may have thought that by sending back a party he would only divulge his secret to others, for in looking for us, in all probability, the empty carts would have been discovered.

" Nothing therefore prevented my giving full attention to my wounded friend, and finding him better, that morning we managed, with some difficulty, to remove him to the rancho, and there made him as comfortable as possible.

" He was so much stronger that we did not hesitate to leave him alone for a short time, during which I and Pepe fulfilled a last duty to our dead comrades. On the plain where they fell we dug one large grave, and there placed them side by side.

" The whole of that day, and of the next, passed

quietly. Towards evening Valentin was again attacked by fever, but Pepe was learned in the use of many medicinal plants, and he searched for and found the caá-curuzú, or holy-herb, from which he made an infusion, bitter to the taste, but most effectual in reducing an abnormally high temperature.

"Valentin and I had been talking for some time before the feverish attack came on, and, to tell the truth, I had hardly attempted to stop him, for he seemed so much better and stronger; but at length his words became incoherent, and he fell back in a heavy but broken sleep.

"I watched by his side for a long time, but I must have dozed off at last, and just as the day was breaking, I was suddenly startled by hearing his voice. I found him greatly excited and actually trembling. 'Oiga! Oiga! el fuego!' he said (Listen to the firing), and at that moment I distinctly heard a volley, then another and another. Evidently an engagement was going on, but I could give it little heed, for the sudden alarm had had a terrible effect on Valentin. The sound of firing had brought his own last experience vividly to his recollection, and it seemed impossible to soothe him, and calm his excitement. He was seized with a violent fit of coughing which shook his whole body, and during one of the paroxysms, the blood poured in torrents from his mouth.

"I cannot say whether he had broken a blood-

vessel, or whether he had been wounded in some vital part, but from that time all hope of his recovery vanished. He was calm and collected, but he never spoke again, and that evening, as the sun was setting, his life ebbed away.

"We buried him close to the rancho, and months afterwards I learned that the firing which so excited him, was the death-knell of the man who had caused his death, for on that very morning Lopez was attacked, defeated, and killed by the Brazilians, on the banks of the river Aquidaban. But of these occurrences, at that time, we knew nothing ; no stragglers came our way, and probably those who escaped, sought shelter in the Cordillera ; nor did we see any signs of the Brazilians, who, I am inclined to think, never followed Lopez's retreating column, but were in front of him, and on his flank, having advanced from the town of Concepcion on the Paraguay, which they had made their head-quarters some months before, and from Bellavista on the Rio Apa.

"There was nothing now to detain us, but for two or three days we lingered at the rancho. It was necessary to decide what line of action I should take. By retracing my steps and going in a southerly direction, I should probably soon fall upon some Brazilian outpost, to which I could surrender, and as I knew that the war had ended in that part of Paraguay, I thought that the worst I should have to

fear, would be a short detention. But with Pepe the circumstances were different. The report had been widely circulated, that all prisoners had been shipped to Brazil and consigned to slavery, and at that time I believed the report, although I now know it to have been malicious. To such a fate I could not lead him ; and I had too, a sacred duty to perform, namely : that of carrying Valentin's last words to his widow, and I should certainly be prohibited from doing this, if I surrendered. I determined, therefore, first to visit Doña Mercedes and my old home, and then, if possible, to find my way to an English gun-boat, and place myself under the protection of the British flag.

“ But while I sat considering as to my future course, thoughts about the hidden treasure were constantly recurring to my mind. From my position I could see the very spot under which it was buried, and away in the distance the ombú, that Valentin had marked, at Don Luis's request. The fact that all that wealth was within reach of my hand, gave me a certain feeling of contentment, but it was alloyed by the thought that Lopez possessed the same knowledge, and that sooner or later he might return to claim it. I was like the dog in the manger, I could not make use of it myself, for I had no means of carrying it away, but I wanted to prevent anyone else from doing so. The idea suddenly came to me to destroy the landmarks, and I remembered what Don Luis had said, that ‘ a rancho would not last for ever,’ and I deter-

mined to burn it, but before doing so, it was requisite to take new bearings, so that at some future day, I might myself be able to find the spot.

"At my order Pepe brought the horses, which were already greatly improved by their rest. Mounting them we rode over the plain, and I studied carefully all the most prominent objects.

"The first thing that I noticed was the other rancho, situated about 400 or 500 yards from the one marked on Don Luis's sketch, which had escaped him, for it was built on lower ground, and was hardly visible from the place at which he had been standing. Then an idea at once struck me. In his plan there was but one rancho, and anyone seeking for the treasure would certainly make that his starting point; this should be *the* rancho, and the other one, the position of which he had marked, should disappear. The appearance of the ground in front was very similar; trees could be barked in the place of those shewn in the plan; and, more than all, the two carts, which above everything would be likely to betray the secret, could be removed, and should serve to mislead, instead of helping to guide those who might come after me.

"I told Pepe to tighten his girths, and then each of us hitching a lazo to a cart pole, we easily drew the empty vehicles across the plain for a distance of about half a mile. There we left them, and I turned my attention to the clump of trees, one of

which Valentin had said that he had barked deeply.

"This one I soon found. It was an ombú which raised its head high above its two comrades, an algarrobo and an ibarô, or soap tree. The algarrobo is a hard, tough tree, very difficult to burn, but the ombú, and the ibarô, when once well lighted up, will burn to cinders. Both of these we fired, and very quickly they were enveloped in flames, which spread so widely that I began to dread a much larger conflagration than I had intended, for at that season of the year, the autumn, everything was parched and dried, and easily caught fire. Fortunately what little wind there was, set towards the open ground, and the flames ran along the edge of the forest without penetrating deeply into the interior.

"Leaving the burning mass we rode to the ombú, under which Don Luis had been standing when joined by Valentin, and the working party. This, too, was fired, and then we passed on to the *tapera*, or rancho. The ranchos, or cottages, to be found throughout Paraguay, are generally extremely well constructed, and compare most favourably with similar buildings in the Argentine Republic. In the latter the posts, beams, and rafters are in the rough, unsquared and unsightly; while in the former, where timber is abundant, not only is every piece carefully cut and shaped but many of them are curiously, and prettily carved.

"The art of carving was introduced by the Jesuit Fathers, who centuries before ruled great districts of the country, and a taste for the finish and polish that they instilled is still found among the people of Paraguay. The instruments used by the wood-cutters, are simply the adze and knife, but with these they turn out work, of a highly ornamental character.

"The rancho that I determined to destroy had probably been one of the outposts of a much larger establishment. The two main supporters of the roof were of urundey, a tree which is excessively hard, and which will last for years even when buried in the ground, and which it is most difficult to destroy, but the remaining posts were of timbers that would burn with greater facility.

"We set fire to the building, and leaving it in flames withdrew to some distance to camp for the night, and to watch the result of the conflagration.

"In turns we kept guard, for there were two dangers to which we were exposed : the wind might change and send the fire right down upon us, or the conflagration might attract stragglers to our neighbourhood. But the night passed quietly, and at early dawn the fires had burnt themselves out.

"The rancho had become a black and smouldering ruin, in which only the two urundey posts still stood erect, while the line of forest near the hidden treasure was completely changed in appearance, for the fire had caught the trees over a considerable

area which jutted out on to the plain, and had only stopped when the supply of fuel had been exhausted.

"It was necessary to remove the posts of urunday and this was a work of great difficulty, but at length we succeeded in digging them up, and replanted them in spots where they will serve as landmarks, if others that I have left should be destroyed.

"I have now told you," continued Don Felix, "all that I know. The rest of my story has but little interest.

"We travelled on horseback until we reached my old home. I fulfilled the sad duty of imparting to Mercedes the news of her husband's death, without entering into all the harrowing details, and I repeated to her his last words of affection, and of advice as to her future. He recommended her to return to her friends at Buenos Ayres, where he possessed a small property, and to leave the Estancia until brighter days should dawn on Paraguay.

"The difficulty was, as to the means of carrying out his injunctions. Every head of cattle had been taken; there was not a bullock, or other beast of burden left upon the estate.

"A Paraguayan woman is capable of making long journeys on foot, and would not have hesitated about walking down to Asuncion, but Mercedes was a comparative stranger to the land, and to the habits of its people. She was incapable of bearing the fatigue, and, moreover, she possessed some household

'gods' and relics of the past with which it would have been hard to part. I spoke to Pepe, and he at once willingly agreed to my suggestion that we should give up our horses.

"This we did, and, after a day's rest, continued our journey south, on foot. It was a long and weary one; our only food was what we could find in the woods—fruits and berries, and sometimes a peludo or a mulita, species of armadilloes, and when we reached the house of Don Juan el Ingles, we were nearly starving.

"He was very kind and hospitable, and I regretted having to leave him so abruptly. From him, I knew that we had nothing to fear, but with regard to his peons it was different. The people of Corrientes suffered greatly at the commencement of the war, for it was on that province that Lopez made his first attack, and they had a deep hatred of Paraguayans, and of all belonging to them.

"Had we fallen into the hands of a group of Corrientinos our throats would have been in great danger, and so we did our best to avoid them, and happily reached the deck of the English gun-boat lying in the Parana, without accident. In Buenos Ayres we ran no risk; the Argentines had long ceased to take any active interest in the Paraguayan question, and we were in no way interfered with. Pepe would willingly have followed me to England, but I dreaded the effects of the change of climate,

and he remained with the relatives of Mercedes, with whom I made proper arrangements for his maintenance.

"We parted with mutual sorrow and regret at the Mole, when I left Buenos Ayres to go on board the mail boat, and it seemed to me that I was breaking the last link with Paraguay, a country in which I had suffered many hardships, but in which I have also passed years of peace and happiness. It still wins upon me, and I have a strong craving to see it once again, before I die."

CHAPTER VIII.

AS TO THE EXISTENCE OF A TREASURE.

As Don Felix ended, a long and almost painful silence fell upon us. Rayne, usually ready with a light and cheerful answer, seemed buried in thought, and I felt quite unprepared to pass any comment on the narrative, to which we had been listening. The idea came home to me at that moment, that in all probability every treasure of which I had heard, or read, or for which I myself had sought, had more or less directly, caused the death of many of my fellow-creatures, either during its accumulation, or at the time of secreting it. The very possession creates envy and jealousy; and the endeavour to keep its existence confined to the knowledge of only one or two persons, necessitates the removal, by fair or foul means, of all others.

There in Paraguay, within a few years, had occurred an awful tragedy—the murder of no fewer than sixteen human beings, at the command of one man who hoped to keep inviolate the secret of where his hoards had been concealed; and here was I, actually drawing

a portion of my income, from the proceeds of an act of piracy committed on the high seas, or of a foray on the coast of Central America. How many persons had lost their lives—probably been murdered—before that plunder was secured, and how many more had died upon the barren bank, where the schooner was wrecked ?

Viewed by this light, treasure-seeking appeared to my mind under a very different aspect, and had my cogitations been continued for a few seconds longer, there is but little doubt that the projects of a lifetime would have been given up; that for the future, I should have desisted from following up my hobby; and that this truthful narrative would never have been written.

But Charley's voice suddenly disturbed my reverie. His thoughts had been probably similar to my own, for when he spoke, he was evidently in a serious mood, very different from his usual cheerful and off-hand manner.

"I should think, Mr. Willis," he said, "that the spirits of your friend Don Valentin, of Don Luis, and of their soldiers will for ever haunt the spot where that blood-stained treasure lies buried, and for my part I would sooner die in the workhouse, than touch a penny of it. But the little that you have said about the country has greatly interested me, and I am quite ready to keep my promise to Arthur, that is to say to Mr. Penistone, to accompany him. The object of

his journey, is to seek for this treasure that he has accidentally heard of, and the report of it that reached him, is now confirmed by your statements. My object is nominally the same as his, but actually it is to search for health, for amusement, and for sport. Let the treasure therefore still remain our goal, but in order to discover it, it is clear that we must have your aid. Will you accompany us? Will you take advantage of this opportunity for re-visiting Paraguay?"

"Before you reply, Mr. Willis," I interposed, "I should like to add something to what Captain Rayne has said. We know that money and jewels have been buried, because your friend Don Valentin actually saw them; but whether the whole 'find' would pay for the trouble and expense of looking for it, we have no means of estimating. The value may be thousands of pounds or may be only a few hundreds; and, indeed, may be nothing, for some one may have been before us, and dug the treasure up. But I agree with Charley; let us make the search for it our goal, and I think the question of using it may well be left in abeyance until it be discovered. There is a spice of adventure, and I should think of danger, in the scheme, that makes it very enticing, and if you are willing to undergo the one, and to brave the other, I repeat Charley's invitation, and will bear all your expenses."

"There is plenty of adventure, and there is much

more than a spice of danger to be encountered, before that treasure can be taken out of Paraguay," was Mr Willis's reply. "Do you imagine that the Government will quietly permit anyone, to carry away from the country, a mass of wealth, not to be counted by hundreds or thousands, but which probably amounts to upwards of two million sterling? As to the question of right, I agree with both of you, gentlemen, let it remain in abeyance; but I firmly believe that a vast sum, such as I have mentioned, was actually buried, and more than that, I have every reason to think that there it still remains. My reasons shall be given as shortly as possible. Before the war of 1868, Paraguay was prosperous and wealthy. The exports largely exceeded the imports, for there was always a ready sale in Buenos Ayres and in Montevideo for all the yerba, tobacco, hides, and other produce that could be shipped down the river. The wants of the people were few, and a great part of the difference in trade returned to Paraguay in the shape of money, of finery, and of jewellery, of which the women, like their sisters in all parts of the world, are very fond.

"So the country was thriving, and wealth was accumulating; no happier people existed than the Paraguayans when I first knew them—their liberty may have been but nominal, but they were careless, if not ignorant, of that fact, for they had always been subservient to some one or other. At one time it had.

been the Spanish Conquerors who domineered over them; then came the Jesuits who exercised an equally arbitrary, though perhaps a milder sway; and in the memory of the present generation they have known no other sort of Government than the despotisms of Francia, and of the Lopez, father and son. As long as the male population gave a fixed period of military service to the State, and the women cultivated enough land to supply their own wants, and those of the Government (for which work they were religiously paid), nothing further was demanded, except that they should believe in the infallibility of the President, for the time being, and should not enter into any plots or conspiracies against him, or his Government. Yerba maté grew wild, it supplied the place of tea and coffee, and furnished a large revenue to the State; cotton could be had for the picking, wood for the cutting, and you had but to scratch the ground and plant maize, mandioca, tobacco, and sugar-cane, and the crops sprang up of themselves.

“In the towns there was a great deal of military display, and every evening the regimental bands played in the public squares. Dancing had been a native institution, much encouraged by the Jesuits, and the people never seemed to weary of it; one had but to whistle the ‘Palomita’ or an habanera in the streets, and at once partners would take hands, and join in those graceful dances.

"Their life may have been a sort of mild slavery, but they were a happy and contented people, and crime of any magnitude was very rare : murder was almost unknown.

"Whether the prosperity of Paraguay was a cause of jealousy to her neighbours, the Empire of Brazil, and the Argentine and Oriental Republics, I cannot say, but certain it is that they eagerly picked up the gauntlet, that Lopez unwisely threw down, and shouted loudly for war. 'In three days we march ! in three weeks we reach Asuncion !! in three months we return!!!' was the pithy, but boastful forecast of the coming combat, addressed in Buenos Ayres to a crowd of excited Argentine volunteers by their General ; four years, however, elapsed before Asuncion was in the hands of the allies, and five before they terminated a war, from which they reaped very little honour, and less profit.

"But, to return to the treasure question. Immediately after the declaration of war, the National Chambers, obedient to the will of their master, voted a sum of five millions of dollars, or say a million sterling, to be placed entirely at his disposal. The money was raised, and passed to the *Tesoreria General de la Nacion*, that is to say, to the coffers of His Excellency the President.

"On this security, he immediately introduced a large forced issue of paper money, and before long he further added to his store by a levy, supposed to

be voluntary, but which was rigidly enforced, not only on the property of the men, but also on the jewels and ornaments of the women, many of them being of great value, and enriched with precious stones. It is difficult to ascertain the total value of the property thus realized. By some it has been estimated at from fifteen to twenty millions of dollars, and undoubtedly it was very large, for the parties possessing any wealth were well-known, and were obliged to disgorge it.

"The sums expended were insignificant. The men under arms were only performing a duty to the Fatherland, and, therefore, there was no necessity to pay them. They must be fed, but the requirements of a Paraguayan soldier are few; the cattle that herded on the pasture lands supplied beef for a considerable time, and the forests furnished yerba-maté. Bands of women were drafted to such places as appeared less likely to suffer from the encroachments of the enemy, and there, during the war, they cultivated maize, mandioca, tobacco, and sugar-cane.

In the early stages of the war it was found that certain individuals in the service of the allies were amenable to bribery and corruption, and through their influence and treachery, guns and arms were purchased and actually passed through the enemy's lines, but the transactions were of small importance, and lasted only for a short period. So, in my belief when we marched up country with a convoy, that

convoy held certainly the whole of the five millions of dollars that the Chambers had voted, and a considerable portion of the forced levy."

"But," I interposed, "surely if Lopez could get guns into the country, he could have sent something out of it."

"That is true," replied Don Felix, "but at the commencement of the war, he was far from expecting the result that eventually happened. At that time he dreamed of success, and made no provision for the future. At a later period he endeavoured to make remittances, and I believe did so to some extent, by means of the foreign gun-boats in Paraguayan waters, of which there were three, one English, the second Italian, and the third American.

"The commander of the first declined to give any assistance, but the Italian certainly took away some boxes which were said to be the property of the President ; for the Provisional Government, formed after the surrender of Asuncion, claimed them as belonging to the State, but was unable to enforce its demand.

"It is stated, too, that the American boat carried away some specie, but the whole amount sent out of the country must have been very small, or, if large, it never reached the persons in whom Lopez had an interest, and to whom, in the event of his death, it should have descended.

*Only a short time after he died, the lady who, as

wife or mistress, had lived with him for many years, and who at the end of the war came to England, bringing with her some of the children, the fruits of their union, was without means for their support, and was forced to dispose of the dresses and ornaments, that remained to her, as mementos of those halcyon days, during which she had reigned supreme in Paraguay.*

"Many of the points to which I have called attention only came to my knowledge long after I had left the country, but they all tend to the same conclusions—that the Marshal deferred parting with his wealth until it was too late, that he carried it with him in the hope of reaching Bolivia and thence passing to England, or to the United States, from some port on the Pacific, but that finding himself hard pressed, as a last resource, he buried it."

"That is all very probable," said Rayne, "but surely a man in the position that Lopez then found himself, would have imparted his secret to some one

* Eliza Alicia Lynch, the lady referred to in the text, died recently in Paris, in very reduced circumstances, if not in actual poverty. She was of Irish birth, and was married in early life to a surgeon of the French Army. After his death, or desertion, for it is not certain which, she resumed her maiden name of Lynch and made the acquaintance of Francisco Solano Lopez in Paris, when he visited several European Courts, as the envoy of his father, Carlos Antonio Lopez, then President of the Republic. She was a woman of commanding, almost majestic presence, and possessed of considerable beauty. Her broad forehead, clear blue eyes, thin compressed lips, and square chin gave one the impression that she had great ability, but at the same time a strong and determined will. This was to a great extent exemplified by the last act of her life. She had the courage to face death unflinchingly, for the letters to a few intimate friends, announcing her demise, were written with her own hand.

or other, for if his wealth was in danger, his life was in still greater peril. Had he no friends or relatives with him, whom he could trust, and to whom he could confide the secret ? ”

“ Yes, there were at least three persons in whom he had confidence, and who stood by him to the last. Two of these were his eldest son and his private secretary, and they both died at his side on the Aquidaban. The third was Mrs. Lynch, the lady of whom I have spoken, and she was the only one of his confidants who escaped with life.”

“ Well then,” I said, “ he must have told her. To whom would a man speak at such a moment, except to the mother of his children ; at least, if he intended to leave his property for their benefit ? ”

“ That is certainly what he intended to do,” said Don Felix, “ and what he did, for he left a will in the hands of the American minister, which was duly proved ; and on the strength of that will Mrs. Lynch on one occasion went to Paraguay, and claimed all the late Marshal’s property. The value of his houses and estates is very small in comparison to the buried treasure ; and I have no doubt, that could she have re-established herself in the country, she would quickly have caused a search to be made for it, but the authorities refused her permission to remain.”

“ I entirely agree with you, Mr. Penistone,” continued Mr. Willis, “ that the Marshal, before his death, had spoken to Mrs. Lynch, and I think that

he also handed to her the sketch made by Don Luis; and an incident that occurred some years afterwards rather serves to prove that this was the case.

"What the Paraguay law regarding mines and minerals, and the hidden treasures of the earth, whether natural or artificial, may be, I cannot say with any certainty, but I have frequently seen announcements in the newspapers, and especially of late years, that such-and-such persons have received permissions from the authorities, to seek for treasure in some designated spots, and I therefore conclude that the State claims everything found below the surface, and only grants mining rights on specified terms.

"A *sociedad anonima*, or limited liability company, formed in Buenos Ayres a few years ago (I think in 1877), commenced its operations on this understanding. Suddenly it was announced all through the River Plate that gold had been discovered in Paraguay; that the discoverers had obtained from the Government, an assignment of all mineral rights over a large area in the hills of Maracayú and Amanbay, where the gold was supposed to exist, and that a company had been formed to work the district.

"Rich samples of ore were exhibited in Buenos Ayres, and for some time the new discovery was the chief topic of conversation, and the subject of many leading articles in the newspapers.

"Certain it is that many of the principal merchants

of Buenos Ayres, both native and foreign, subscribed to the undertaking, and I believe that the shares were at one time at a high premium. The gold-fever does not, however, appear to have attacked any-one but the members of the company ; there was no rush of prospectors or speculators to the fields from the neighbouring Argentine provinces, although in several of them mining is the chief industry ; nor did the Paraguayans hasten to avail themselves of the great discovery that had been made in their own land. On the contrary they showed a great want of interest, and sarcastically remarked that the Gold Mining Company was a "Gold Robbing Company," and the Government appeared to endorse the general opinion, for when the expedition arrived from Buenos Ayres, was organized in Asuncion, and commenced, after some delay, its march to the gold-fields, it was accompanied by an escort which the authorities kindly provided, as some supposed, to protect it against the Indians, and, as others imagined, to prevent the extradition of a Paraguayan treasure.

"I think that the Government was wise, for the expedition, though thoroughly well supplied with arms for its defence, was not well provided with the machinery or implements, which are generally supposed to be requisite for the extraction of gold. It neither carried stamps, in case the gold should be found in quartz, nor sieves for washing, but it was well supplied with spades and pick-axes.

"To this day, I never know whether the highly respectable English gentlemen who permitted their names to be inserted in the company's prospectus, in the capacity of directors, were dupes of the promoters or merely instruments to dupe confiding shareholders ; but certain it is that the undertaking collapsed in a shorter time than it had taken to create it, that the expedition returned unsuccessful, and that the company was very quickly in liquidation.

"There is, I think, no question that the company and its expedition were based on the information afforded by the sketch made by Don Luis, that he had delivered to the Marshal, and that ultimately came into the possession of Mrs. Lynch."

"And why, then, did they not succeed in their object," inquired Rayne, "if they held the key in their hands ? "

"Well, I doubt whether it was a key to them. Unless there was some one in the expedition who knew exactly the spot where the carts turned off from the main road, they probably never found the plain ; and even if they found the plain, it is very likely that they were misled by the changes that I had made in its appearance, and that they set to work in the wrong place.

"Anyhow, the expedition proved abortive, but the fact that the attempt was made only a few years ago serves to prove that at that time the treasure was

still supposed to be in existence. Since that period I have never heard even a report that it has been discovered, and I feel convinced that the earth, that covers the deposit made by Valentin and his party, has never since been disturbed."

CHAPTER IX.

OUR EXPEDITION IS SETTLED.

IN the commencement of the last chapter I endeavoured to portray the effect that the story of Don Felix had had upon me, and I have stated that I was nearly prepared to relinquish the prosecution of my "fad," and to resign for ever, all claims to the title of treasure-seeker.

But, as by degrees I learnt, that in the country itself and its neighbourhood, there was a strong belief in the existence of a mine of wealth, and that persons of sense and means had invested their money in an undertaking for its discovery, so there came back to my mind the desire of being successful where others had failed.

Rayne, who had many a time smiled at my projects, and turned my "hobby" into ridicule, had now changed sides completely. When I raised doubts, he refuted them vehemently—almost angrily. He had taken a great liking to Don Felix, and firmly believed in every word of his story; nor did I myself see any reason to question its truth. I could

not, however, accept so decidedly as Charley did, the assurance that the treasure had not been removed, for it did not seem to me by any means clear that, in the event of its discovery, the fact should have been made public to the whole world.

Then, too, there were other considerations of which Charley made light, but which required mature deliberation. First came the state of his health; the sea voyage would most likely prove beneficial, but could he stand the hardships of a long march to the scene of operations, through an almost uninhabited country, and the equally harassing return, possibly under depressing, and disappointing circumstances?

What I had called "a spice of adventure," grew, moreover, after further discussions with Don Felix, into a very serious risk.

He frankly stated that, in the event of our success, we could not return through the civilized districts of Paraguay, for the Government would undoubtedly seize anything, whether great or small, that we might have discovered; and that, consequently, we should have to find another route out of the country. There were two outlets, one was that by which Lopez had hoped to effect his escape, namely, across Bolivia to the Pacific; the other was to the east over the Cordillera, and across the Alto or Upper Paruná into Brazilian territory, a route that had been closed to the Marshal. It would be almost

impossible to avoid the Indians by either of these roads, and, according to Don Felix, the Guaranis on the Brazilian side were more dangerous than the Guaycurus of Bolivia. On the other hand the desert of Bolivia would be an insuperable obstacle to our passage, in the present state of Rayne's health.

Then, again, to start with any hope of success it was absolutely necessary that Mr. Willis should lead the expedition, otherwise we could only expect a similar result to that of the company of Buenos Ayres, viz., a miserable failure. But Mr. Willis had objections which we had some difficulty in overcoming. He offered us every assistance, and said that he would hand to us at once his own plan, by which he believed that anyone could put his finger on the spot where the treasure was lying, but he could not afford the sacrifice of time.

It was, of course, a question of money—Mr. Willis was the factor of a small estate, and tenant of a cattle farm in the Lowlands, and by leaving his employment, and withdrawing his personal attention from the cattle, he would undoubtedly sacrifice his own interests. His demands were, however, by no means extravagant, and Rayne gladly agreed to join with me, in making good any loss that Willis might sustain.

There still remained difficulties to be overcome. Mrs. Rayne's consent to the departure of her son had to be obtained, and also his doctor's approval of the project.

Charley had a little of that selfishness, which generally grows upon an invalid, but he was an affectionate son, and would not have cared to start upon a long journey in opposition to his mother's wishes. He was, therefore, anxious to satisfy her about the country that we proposed to visit, and to do this, we determined to introduce Mr. Willis, and to let him undergo any amount of cross-questioning as to the climate, and people of the land of which he had had so large an experience.

Tryst was made at Southsea, and one evening we met in solemn conclave—Mrs. Rayne, the doctor, and the trio whose proposed journey, depended in a great measure on the result of our deliberations.

The opening discussion was not unfavourable, Dr. Harvey, in his youth, had made several voyages, and in one of them he had visited the River Plate. He considered that the sea-voyage would be neither too long nor too short for his patient, but he deprecated a prolonged stay in the tropics, in which he believed that Paraguay was situated, pointing out that Captain Rayne had already suffered from remaining for some years in the hot climate of India. "Is it a mountainous or a flat country, and is the climate dry or damp?" he asked.

The cross-examination was searching, not only on the part of Mrs. Rayne and the Doctor, but many questions were also put by Charley and myself, for,

when we came to consider, we found that we knew very little about the country.

Willis's replies to our inquiries were brief and to the point, and the information he gave us may be summed up as follows :

Paraguay is between the 22nd and 27th degrees of south latitude, and so the northerly portion is just within the tropics. If we carry out our proposed journey, we must reach a spot just within the limit of the Tropic of Capricorn. It is a larger country than Great Britain, and is an inland island, for, speaking generally, it may be said to be divided on all sides from its neighbours by three great rivers, the Apa on the north, the Paraguay on the west, and the Upper or Alto Paraná on the south and east, but it is at a considerable distance from the ocean, Asuncion, the capital, being more than 1,000 miles from Buenos Ayres, the capital of the Argentine Confederation, at the mouth of the River Plate. It is divided into two parts by a chain of mountains called the Cordillera of Amanbay or Maracayú, which traverses it from north to south, and is the water-shed of the rivers. From the foot of this sierra the land slopes gently on both sides to the two great rivers, the Paraguay, and the Alto Paraná. Towards the former it stretches into vast plains, dotted with "yerbales" and other woods containing much valuable timber and well adapted for agricultural or pastoral purposes, and on the west into dense and virgin

forests, impenetrable except by means of the rivers, many of which are navigable, that flow into the Paraná. In one spot to the south of the Isla del Salto Grande, the sierra creeps underneath the river, and creates a waterfall that in many respects rivals that of Niagara.

The climate is hot and dry, but the winds, which are very variable, have a great effect on the temperature. The cool and refreshing ones, are from the south and south-east, and the most trying ones, are from the north and north-east. While the latter blow everything seems to suffer ; people complain of fever and headache, animals are restless and miserable, flowers fade and wither, and even metals are quickly oxydised. Happily they do not last long, and are only felt during the very hot season.

In summer the temperature sometimes is 100° Fahrenheit, but seldom exceeds it, and the mean is 85 to 90. In winter, that is to say from May to August, the mean is 62 to 65, and sometimes it is as low as 40.

"During the nights in Paraguay," continued Mr. Willis, "one always wants some sort of covering ; and in winter it should be a good thick blanket. If we go, we shall be there during the winter months, and shall have no reason to complain of excessive heat."

"And what," enquired the Doctor, "are the ill-

nesses from which people mostly suffer? I think I have heard it stated that you yourself had a serious illness. What might that have been?"

"Chucho," said Mr. Willis. "It is an intermittent fever that one catches from sleeping on the ground under the sun, which at certain hours throws out great heat even during the coldest weather, or from living on land where the trees have recently been cut down, and the soil has been disturbed. I caught it when clearing my own land, and it prostrated me for some time. Even when I went on active service I had some attacks, but camp life did me good, and the soldiers were always better in the open country than in barracks. The natives have *chucho*, but not badly; they suffer principally from indigestion, diarrhoea and dysentery, probably the result of their diet, and they get rheumatism too, but I have never heard of typhus, cholera, or yellow fever. During the war, and especially towards its end, there was a great deal of small-pox, but I believe that the disease was introduced by the Brazilians, at a time when it was impossible to enforce vaccination, as had always been the practice before peace was disturbed. I do not know," concluded Mr. Willis, "what is the matter with Captain Rayne, but I have noticed that he has a bad cough, if it has anything to do with the lungs, I can only say that Paraguay was regarded as a sort of sanatorium, and that *Porteños* and *Orientales*, that is to say the people of Buenos Ayres and Mon-

tevideo, suffering from affections of the lungs, used to go up there to be cured."

We had not attempted to *prime* Mr. Willis, and his short and straightforward answers to their inquiries made a favourable impression on Mrs. Rayne and Doctor Harvey. All opposition to Charley's departure was withdrawn, though naturally there was grief in the mother's heart, at having to part again from her only son.

She placed him in my hands as a sacred trust, but happily she divided the responsibility with Willis, for whom she seemed to have conceived a great regard. On him she impressed the necessity of preventing Charley from sleeping on the wet ground, and catching chuchó, and she gave me a side blow when she concluded, by saying "And as to treasure, why should those poor people be robbed? We have enough for all our wants, and why should you risk your lives, and those of the Indians and savages, for the sake of this money that has already been the cause of terrible sacrifices?"

I made no reply, and I do not know what Mr. Willis said, for at the moment I was occupied with the farewells between the Doctor and Charley. "Well, good-bye, my boy," said the former, "my belief always has been, that nature will some day relieve you of that bullet that I and others of the profession, have been unable to remove; and when that happens you will soon recover your health and

strength. It may happen just as well there as here, and so I do not see why your plans should be upset. Come back well and strong, to get married and settle down."

"Suppose I get married out there, doctor?" said Charley, with his pleasant smile.

"What! to a Paraguayan lady? Ah! that is a question for your mother."

"I should not mind one bit, doctor," interposed Mrs. Rayne. "Let him come back to me, married or unmarried, that is all I ask, and though he may bring a foreign wife, whose language I cannot speak, at least I can take her to my arms, and love her like a daughter."

The next morning saw our departure for London, and we at once commenced the preparations for our voyage.

Charley took in hand the war department, and certainly made his purchases on a large and generous scale. In a short time our common sitting-room was turned into a *depôt* for arms. In every corner there was a gun-case, and under every table a box of cartridges, while the sofas and chairs were covered with revolvers and bowie knives. His greatest anxiety was to obtain two magazine rifles, on the pattern of a recent Austrian invention, and at one time I lived in dread that our departure would be postponed, owing to their non-arrival; happily, and greatly to Charley's comfort and to my own satisfaction, they

reached us just in time. Willis undertook to find our saddlery, and went about his business very quietly. He did not send or bring anything to our rooms, but he showed me the invoices of what he had purchased, and told me that the things would be sent straight on board.

For my part, the duties assigned to me were soon fulfilled. I secured our passages, made arrangements with my bankers, and bought the few extras that were necessary to complete my outfit for a voyage through the tropics, and for an inland journey. Soon I began, to find time hanging heavily on my hands, and to long for the day appointed for our departure, and I was not sorry when circumstances called me away from town for a few days.

CHAPTER X.

A NEW RELATION.

ALTHOUGH one's immediate relatives may be very few in number, yet I imagine that, by tracing back, most people would be able to find numerous cousins, and other relations, more or less remote. I never did trace back, and was content with one solitary relative, a cousin of my mother's father, who like him had served in the navy, though not until my grandfather had left it. I do not know what rank he had attained when he left the service, but he never called himself commander or captain, he was simply, when given all his titles, Joseph Kearsney, of Manor House, Penbury, Esquire, Justice of the Peace.

Our correspondence was extremely limited, and our communications very rare. If I was in England, he invariably sent me a brace or two of partridges towards the end of the shooting season, accompanied by an invitation to pass a few days with him whenever it should suit me to leave town, and I generally went to him in the following June, to my mind the loveliest month in the year for country enjoyment.

I had already accepted his invitation for the coming Midsummer, but as my plans had been changed. I had written to make my excuses, and had given some details of my projected journey.

Somewhat to my surprise, he wrote to me with a show of affection that he had never previously displayed ; he was growing old, he said, and he should like to see me before I left England, and his nearest neighbour, and most intimate friend, was very anxious to make my acquaintance.

As I have said I was not sorry for an excuse to leave London, and having explained to Charley and Willis the cause of my journey, I packed my portmanteau and started for my visit.

Penbury is a market town, but neither large nor lively. It is a centre of the perry and cider trades, and possesses a certain celebrity on account of its mineral springs. Life at the Manor House, according to my previous experience, was excessively dull ; the inmates were the master, his housekeeper, the butler and maid-servants, and the visitors were very few in number. But the cooking was good, the attendance excellent, and the cellar perfect ; and, as I advanced in years, I had learned to appreciate the value of all such comforts.

When I arrived at the house, there were two things that struck my attention ; in the first place, there was a new man-servant, a very respectable man to all appearances, and, I should say, an improvement on his

predecessor, and in the second place, this man-servant informed me, in reply to my inquiries for Mr. Kearsney, that the *master and mistress* were both out, but that they were expecting me, and would return very shortly. He showed me into the drawing-room, and its very appearance startled me. I turned round with the intention of asking him who was this mistress of whom I had never previously heard, but I am a hesitating man, always in want of words just when they are required, and the question seemed to die away upon my lips.

Left alone, I looked round the room. On my former visits, it had always seemed to be a hateful apartment. A long narrow room with three French windows looking on to a lawn, so thickly surrounded by trees that no light or sun could ever penetrate through them ; a room that I had entered once by daylight, but that I had never again approached, except on the occasion of the dinner party which was invariably given during my annual visit, after which we adjourned for a short time to this dreary state-room. To-day it was no longer dreary ; some of the trees that had obstructed the light had been removed, and the evening sun was shining on the furniture that I had known for many years. It was of walnut, inlaid with brass, of an antique pattern, and had formerly been covered with horse-hair, but this had now been exchanged for a damask, in blue and white. The dark paper of a claret colour, had given way to

a bright wall-covering, and in place of the high old-fashioned pianoforte, there now stood a pretty semi-grand by a modern maker. Flowers, not in masses, but gracefully arranged in little bouquets, stood on every table and in every corner, and a stand of books containing the latest publications, and bearing the label of the proprietors of the nearest railway book-stall, showed that the mistress of the house possessed some literary taste. But who was this new mistress? I was greatly puzzled, I confess, for I could see no reason why Mr. Kearsney should not have announced his marriage to me ; even if he had married his house-keeper (which I always suspected he would do), he surely might have mentioned the fact before inviting me to visit him, under totally different circumstances from those that I had formerly known. And yet, somehow, I could not convince myself that the house-keeper had become Mrs. Kearsney. I endeavoured to recall her to my mind, and I saw before me a middle-aged lady of considerable refinement, but not possessed of any beauty or attractions, such as would be likely to entice an elderly gentleman to make an offer of his hand. And those books, and that new piano made me doubt my theory of the housekeeper, for they seemed to be novelties introduced by a lady, younger than the one whom I had known as presiding over the household.

I was still in this dilemma when the door opened, and a handmaiden brought me a prettily arranged

tea-tray. I am not partial to afternoon tea, but here was an opportunity for eliciting some information. I am, I think, a nervous man, and I do not like addressing young hand-maidens, especially at first sight, but I summoned up all my courage, and standing in a sort of medium position, half looking at myself in the glass, and half inclined to the young woman, I said :

"Thank you. Can you tell me if Mrs. Prowse is still here ?"

"You mean the late housekeeper?" the young person replied, evidently without any nervousness. "No, sir ; she left when the mistress came, but she is living in the neighbourhood."

Clearly then my uncle had not married Mrs. Prowse, but the result of my inquiry had not helped to enlighten me as to whom he had married. To put the direct question was, I knew, beyond my powers, and so I did not attempt it, and, declining the tea, asked to be shown to my room.

I dressed leisurely, and waited for some time after the first dinner-bell had resounded through the house, before descending to the drawing-room.

As I opened the door I saw a lady rise from the sofa. "Ah," I thought, "the new mistress. What *am* I to say? How *shall* I address her? I wish Kearsney was here to introduce me." I advanced timidly, and nearly fell over a chair that I had not noticed in the half light, but before I had fully

recovered myself, I found the lady standing close to me, and holding out her hand.

"Oh, Mr. Penistone, I really do not know how to apologize for not being here to meet you. It does appear so ungracious. We drove out with the intention of picking you up at the station on our return, but Mr. Kearsney was detained for some business at the house of a brother justice—by-the-bye, at Mr. Granton's. You know him, I think, and he wants very much to see you, and is coming to dinner to-morrow night. And so the time passed, and we only reached home as the dressing-bell was ringing."

She rattled on so pleasantly, and with such a clear musical voice, that I was sorry when she ended, and it became obligatory on me to say something. What that something was I cannot remember, but probably I explained that no apology was necessary, and I know that I ended by inquiring after Mr. Kearsney, for his name was the keynote of her next sentence.

"Mr. Kearsney is very well, indeed, thank you. We were abroad for two months in the winter, and I think it did him good, and since we returned he has been interested in the changes we have made. Do you think this room is improved?"

"That was the honeymoon," was my mental conjecture, but verbally I was congratulating her on the decided improvement she had effected, when Mr. Kearsney entered.

"Ah! Arthur, my dear boy, I am very pleased to see you, and very sorry we did not meet you at the train. So, Grace, I see you have made acquaintance with your new cousin, and I need not introduce you. There's the bell, will you take Grace into dinner?"

I offered my arm, and, more puzzled than ever, led my *new cousin* into the dining-room. As we passed into the light of the hall, I caught a glimpse of her person, and noticed that she was rather above the middle height, I should think about five feet five inches, and with a shape in proportion, and when a little later, seated at the side of the table, I looked again, I put her age at twenty-four or twenty-five. But whatever her exact height and age may have been, I know that I was at once greatly impressed by her appearance. I am a bad hand at *dissecting* a lady but not a bad judge of her *tout-ensemble*, and I know what pleases me. I certainly was pleased, and yet I could not point out the particular traits that attracted my attention. She seemed to me an honest, healthy English country girl. Her hair was dark brown and rippling; her eyes were, I think, also brown; her nose thin and straight; her complexion was fair; and her cheeks were rosy like her lips; her neck long and white; her shoulders well squared; and she sat upright as a dart. Her dress was of corded grey silk, cut square in front, through which peeped a very white bosom, set, so to speak, in a framework of lace, and lace also fringed the ends of her sleeves, and fell over

a hand, small and slim, on which the blue veins showed themselves prominently. I made my survey while the soup was passing round, and then, with the sherry, I joined in the conversation. It turned upon my proposed visit to South America, and on that subject I was at home. Our hostess asked several questions, and I replied to them satisfactorily, although sometimes I felt an awkwardness as to the manner in which I should address her. Matters had proceeded very smoothly until the dessert stage. I was sipping very quietly my first glass of after-dinner claret, which had been warmed exactly to the right point, and I then hazarded a remark.

"There have been many changes, Kearsney, since I was here last. What has become of the old butler?"

"Poor fellow, he died nearly twelve months ago, and Mrs. Prowse, the housekeeper, whom you must remember, would not stand a new mistress, and so she resigned and has taken a public-house close by."

"Mrs. Prowse must have been hard to please," I replied, "if she could not support the *régime* of Mrs. Kearsney."

Now, while Joseph was speaking, I had turned and pointed the above reply, which I thought was brief and courteous, and which I imagined conveyed a pretty compliment to my hostess, without in any way offending Mrs. Prowse, *resigned*; but the effect was totally different from what I had expected. There was absolute silence, I should say for some seconds,

and then on my left I heard a sort of gurgle. I turned my head in that direction, and was surprised to find Mrs. Kearsney employed in, what seemed to me, the act of endeavouring to masticate a portion of her *serviette*. Certainly a large corner was forced into her mouth, and it gave me the impression that she was endeavouring to stifle a fit of laughter. I turned from her to her *vis-à-vis*, and found my cousin looking intently at me.

"I think, I have fallen into an error, Joseph," I remarked ; "I had supposed that you had married since I last saw you."

Then the lady no longer disguised the fact that something had amused her for she sat back in her chair, and laughed aloud. Joseph joined with a boisterous "Ha ! ha ! ha !" and I could hardly avoid following suit. At last my companions calmed down, though the lady still broke into little bursts, and my cousin said :

"Well, Arthur, you certainly have fallen into an error. Why, did you never receive my letter telling you that Grace was coming to live with me ?"

"Never, I assure you," I replied.

"Why, Grace," said Joseph, "it's more than six months ago since I wrote, is it not ?"

But Grace did not answer ; she had exchanged the dinner-napkin for a laced pocket-handkerchief, and with this to her face she got up hastily and left the room. Before I had closed the door, I heard another

merry peal of laughter, and thought that the new-found cousin was treating me shamefully.

Explanations followed, and I found that Grace Bertram was the only daughter of Joseph's sister ; and that, when that lady died, her husband having pre-deceased her, Joseph had brought Grace to live with him.

"And I was never so comfortable and happy before," he said. "Mrs. Prowse did not like having her nose put out of joint, though, as a matter of fact, Grace never interfered with her ; and at last she gave me notice. I was not sorry ; and since she left, Grace has managed everything to perfection."

"But it will make a difference to you, my boy," he added. "I meant to have left you the old house and all that I have, but now you must share it with her."

"My dear Joseph," I replied, "any question as to the disposal of your property has never entered my brain. I know nothing of Miss Bertram's position, but as you say she is a great comfort to you, I think that in justice you should see that she is provided for."

"Miss Bertram, I suppose you mean Grace," he said abruptly. "Well, she has an income of her own, but all the same I mean to add to it. Why cannot you stay at home instead of following a wild-goose chase in search of imaginary treasures. Are there none at home that you should seek for them abroad ?"

I was put on my mettle. I could not fail to understand the hint, and I drew myself together very stiffly before I replied :

"My journey, Joseph, was planned and arranged before I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Bertram, or Grace, if you prefer that I should so call her, and although I have no doubt that she is a treasure, far more valuable than anything I am likely to find, yet my knowledge of her, derived from about two hours of her society, is hardly sufficient to induce me to give up our expedition in which two other men are interested as well as myself."

"Well, well, Arthur," said my cousin, "I will say nothing more about it, but I do think that it is time you began to settle down."

Then we adjourned to the drawing-room, where we found Grace at her piano.

No further allusion was made to my unfortunate error, and the evening passed very pleasantly. So, I must confess, did the next day. We both accepted the position of cousins, and at once became *Grace* and *Arthur* to one another. We walked and rode together, and I was very sorry when it became necessary to dress for the dinner-party.

There was nothing remarkable about it, but Mr. Granton, whom Grace had mentioned on our first meeting, as being anxious to see me, took an early opportunity for stating, that so soon as he heard that I was going to Paraguay, he determined to write to

me ; but on learning that I was coming to Penbury, he had preferred to await my arrival. His business, he said, was of a private and personal nature and only intended for my ear, and he ended by inviting me to luncheon at his house the next day. I had to return to London in the afternoon, and therefore did not want to lose the short time in which I might cultivate Grace's society, but I could not altogether refuse the invitation of my cousin's most intimate friend, and ultimately it was agreed that I should visit him early in the morning.

Accordingly I drove over, a distance of eight or nine miles, to his place, a solid, square, comfortable country house, surrounded by a good deal of pasture and woodland.

My host was a bachelor, like his friend my cousin Kearsney, but unlike him he had no pretty relative to attend to the domestic arrangements.

Mr. Granton lost no time in telling me the reason for his particularly desiring to see me. He was, he said, the elder of two brothers, and while he, during his father's lifetime, chiefly resided at home, and looked after the property, the younger one had entered the army, and some years ago had been stationed with his regiment at Malta. Here Major Granton became enamoured of a lady, a native of the island, of highly respectable family, and possessed of great personal attractions. Unfortunately he did not consult his father, but had been already married

for some time when he announced the fact. Mr. Granton was greatly angered, for in addition to the want of confidence, there was the grave fact that he had married a Papist, a most serious fault in the opinion of a country gentleman of the old Protestant school. And there were still worse things to follow.

“Robert,” said my host, “was neither wild nor extravagant in his personal habits, but he was careless, good-hearted, and unbusiness-like, and some of his friends and brother officers had taken advantage of these defects in his character.

“He had given guarantees for friends in difficulties and had backed their bills, and shortly after his marriage life commenced, he found himself deeply involved. In the end he sold his commission, and returned to England.

“The interview that he had with my father was very stormy. The old gentleman upbraided him with his want of respect, in providing him with a daughter-in-law, without consulting his wishes; he threatened to stop his allowance, and absolutely declined to help him out of his pecuniary difficulties.

“I was abroad at the time, and when I returned it was to find my father still angry, but at the same time growing anxious, for he had not heard from Robert for months, and I could see that he was quite prepared to meet any friendly advances, should they be made to him. But it was too late. After a long inquiry, I satisfied myself that Robert had joined a

party of emigrants who had left this country for Paraguay, about the time that a loan was issued in London, for that country.

"The more I heard about this expedition the more anxious I became, and my father, whose anger had now evaporated, was just as desirous, as I could be, to get his son home again. He wrote to him himself, asking him to return, and placing at his disposal, in a bank in Buenos Ayres, a sum of money to meet all immediate requirements.

"One letter we had in reply, and in that Robert spoke most highly of the country, and of its resources; he stated that the majority of the emigrants was a very bad lot, but that there were a few decent people, with some of whom he had determined to leave Itapé, where the colony had been established, and to proceed further into the interior.

He wrote in affectionate terms to his father, and sent the love of his wife and only child, a girl four or five years old, recommending them both to our care, in case anything should happen to him. The old gentleman was very pleased; he agreed to his remaining abroad for a few years, and made him another remittance to help him to stock a farm.

"This remittance never reached him. Before long, there came rumours that the colonists were in difficulties; that they were without provisions, that they were dying by hundreds; and eventually that

those who had survived, had been brought down by charity to Buenos Ayres.

"At that time there was no English consul in the country, but we got into communication with a gentleman who had resided there for many years, and who seemed to be an unpaid, and unrecognized, representative of Great Britain.

"From him we learned that the starvation story had been exaggerated ; that the mass of the colonists had resided for nearly twelve months in the country, well provided with every necessary of life ; but that they had never put the shoulder to the wheel, had never used the spades and ploughs with which they were amply provided, nor sown a grain of corn. The result was that the Paraguayan Government cut off the supplies, gradually but decisively. A cry arose among the English population of Buenos Ayres that their countrymen were dying by scores in Paraguay of sheer starvation, and it met with a speedy and charitable response.

"Among the *Lincolnshire farmers*, who were said to have emigrated to Paraguay, there were a good many East-end-of-London Polish Jews, and their co-religionists in Buenos Ayres, so ably supported the appeal for assistance to distressed Englishmen, that the British Minister to the Argentine Republic was induced to lend his name, and to head a subscription list.

"In truth, some sixty out of upwards of a thousand

had died ; measles had broken out with virulence, and had carried off many of the little ones ; diseases contracted before they left home had caused the death of several adults ; and some of the oldest members had succumbed to the hardships attendant on a long voyage, and on attempting to start, at an advanced age, a new life in a foreign land.

“ But the names of Major Granton and his wife, did not appear in the lists, of those who had received charitable assistance, or of the victims in the colony. According to the news that reached us, he appears to have thrown all his energy into the work before him ; to have combined with a few of the *élite* of the colonists in an attempt to make a home further in the interior, and to have started with the intention of establishing themselves in a district that had been strongly recommended, as possessing great agricultural advantages.

“ During the journey they had to cross one of the many large rivers which traverse the country, and there was a hitch in the passage of one of the bullock-carts. Robert hastened to give his assistance, but was either struck by the pole or fell into deep water, and, in any case, was drowned. The wife only survived him for a few months ; probably his loss preyed upon her, for I believe that they had been very happy, and she contracted fever which soon laid her by his side. As to the child, all our inquiries were in vain. We made interest at the Foreign Office,

and instructions were sent to the English representatives at Buenos Ayres, to assist in the search. Notices were inserted in all the newspapers, and rewards were offered for proofs of her death, if dead, or for producing her if alive.

"The remittances made to Robert, which he, poor fellow, never touched, and which amount to upwards of £1,000, still remain at the bank, and are offered as a reward to anyone who may discover his daughter. My father," continued Mr. Granton, "never believed in her death; he always thought that some of the survivors of the colony had taken pity on the little waif, and brought her down to Buenos Ayres; but in that case it is most probable that some one would have claimed the reward.

"*My* belief is, that she was taken *up* the country by some kindly natives who may, perhaps, never see a newspaper, and have never even heard of the money awaiting a claimant. In any case, Mr. Penistone, your visit to Paraguay offers an opportunity for making inquiries about her, which may never occur again; and I implore you to lend me your assistance. Spare no money! Draw on me for what you may require, and, if possible, bring her back. If I could recover her, I should be able to make some reparation to Robert, the end of whose career I charge in some measure to my own fault, for, had I not been abroad seeking my own pleasure, I should probably have been able to prevent his departure."

I offered my sympathies to Mr. Granton and promised to do all in my power to carry out his wishes, but I asked him for some further information, as to his niece's age, and appearance.

"If she be alive," he replied, "Alice must be about sixteen years of age. I have never seen her or her mother, but I have a photograph of the latter, taken shortly after her marriage. From that, I imagine, that she was a young lady of slight and graceful figure, of dark complexion, and I should think that her hair was chestnut, certainly it was not black. Robert was like myself when I was younger, but much better looking—a tall, broad man, with blue laughing eyes, and light coloured hair, which soon fell off; at thirty-five he was nearly bald."

This was all the information that I could obtain, and so I took my leave and returned to the Manor House.

The afternoon passed pleasantly, but far too quickly. Kearsney gently bantered me about my hobby, and Grace's last words, as the train moved from the Station were, "Arthur, mind that I am to have the first news of your treasure."

As I travelled up to town, my thoughts turned much more on the "lass I left behind me," than on the journey on which we were about to start, and I pondered over the query that Kearsney had put to me on the previous evening, whether I could not find a treasure at home, instead of seeking it abroad. It

had clearly meant, "Ask Grace to be you wife, and everything shall be made comfortable." The offer was very tempting, but what would Charley and Willis think of me?

I lighted a cigar and travelled onwards, determined to fulfil the earlier engagement that I had contracted, to visit foreign parts.

CHAPTER XI.

TO THE RIVER PLATE.

I HAVE great faith in Whitaker, but I confess that a statement which appears in this year's Almanack, has somewhat staggered me. It is to this effect: "The number of steamers arrived at the ports of the Argentine Republic during the year 1885 was 15,740." The ports on the sea-board are only four or five, and, with the exception of Buenos Ayres and Bahia Blanca, there is not one worthy of the name of *port*; but if Rosario, San Nicolas and all the towns and villages on the Plate and Paraná be included, and if all the steamers plying between them be added to the sea-going vessels, the number still appears to be enormous. Turning to another page of the Almanack, I find that "the total number of vessels which entered and cleared at Indian ports from and to foreign countries in 1885-1886 was 10,562." What! does the number of *steamers alone* trading in, and with the Argentine Confederation, exceed by fifty per cent. the total number of vessels, that enter and clear from the

British Empire in India—from such ports as Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, and Kurrachee? It seems incredible, and I fancy there must be an error somewhere; though I cannot say whether the unit or the zero should be docked; whether the figures should read 5740 or 1574, but I am inclined to think that the latter is nearer the mark, certainly as regards sea-going steamers.

Even this number shows how enormously the trade of the country has been developed in a short time. Thirty years ago, communication between Europe and the River Plate was confined to one steamer per month, and even that one did not go direct. The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company dispatched its monthly steamer from Southampton to Rio Janeiro, and at the latter port, passengers for the South were transhipped to a smaller vessel. The voyage took thirty-six or thirty-seven days, and the cost of a passage exceeded what is now paid for the journey to Australia. Competitors in the trade soon arose, and there are now about twenty Lines of steamers plying between Europe and the River Plate.

One of the earliest rivals of the Royal Mail, was the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. It commenced its career more than forty years ago on the Pacific coast, with two small wooden steam vessels, the *Chili* and the *Peru*, and at the outset does not appear to have merited the approbation of residents in those ports, for they attached to the four

letters *P.S.N.C.*, which the company bears on its house-flag, a very different signification, to that which had been intended. *Poca simpatía, ninguna compasión*, was the Spanish version of the company's title, implying that it did not bestow that attention to the passengers' comfort that they had reason to expect.

But whether the Line ever deserved this reputation or not, at least it grew rapidly into importance, and before many years had passed, the fleet, that at first was composed of two little wooden steamers, had become one of forty iron vessels of imposing size. It was in one of these, that our expedition took passage, partly because there is a slight gain in point of time, but chiefly for the reason that it avoided calling at Rio Janeiro, or other Brazilian port, and this saved us from the risk, of having to undergo quarantine, on arrival in the Plate.

We crossed the dreaded bay in the calmest of weathers; there never once was an occasion to rig the "fiddles" to keep the crockery from tumbling about, or off, the table; nor was there ever an opportunity for the "old traveller" to display his superior knowledge and demonstrate to new comers a simple, but by no means pleasing method of keeping a glass from sliding off the table, namely, by wetting the cloth and thus causing it to adhere.

We touched at Vigo, where the galleons sunk by Admiral Rooke in an action, during the wars of succession, are still supposed to be lying with all

their treasures, and here we filled up with five to six hundred *gallegos*, bound for the South. Among them was a large party of priests and acolytes, from whom came the only complaint that was made during the voyage. It was not of a serious nature, and was to the effect that the soup was too good, and strong, for their digestions.

One day we passed at Lisbon, and I was much struck by the appearance of a funeral procession. Talk of reformed funerals! of doing away with all the melancholy paraphernalia to which we are accustomed at home! here certainly, there was nothing lugubrious. The old-fashioned car was painted red, and the postillion wore a jacket of the same colour, with high boots reaching to the thighs, and ornamented with enormous spurs.

On the seventh day out, we entered the Porto Grande of San Vincent in the Cape Verd Isles, Ilhas Verdes, as the Portuguese, who are the owners, call them.

There is very little green about San Vincent, and it is generally styled a barren spot—a miserable hole—a wretched place; but I think that the people who write about it in this way, forget what a child it is, when compared with its sisters of the same group, Santa Lucia, San Antonio, and San Nicolas. These, probably some thousands of years older, produce maize, beans, and fruits in abundance; and a very remarkable improvement may even be noticed

in San Vincent, in the few years that have elapsed, since it was first made a port of call. It is no longer one black mass of volcanic rock, but by degrees the sides of the mountains are becoming covered with a green weed; down on the beach, trees have been planted, and already there is a little avenue surrounding the Praça; while the three or four houses which at that time sufficed for the inhabitants, have now increased to hundreds. It must always be a coaling station of the greatest importance for steamers to the Cape of Good Hope, and to South America, and is worthy of constant study, for if its progress be watched, some idea may be obtained as to the period of time that is necessary, for nature and art combined, to turn a barren rock into a fertile island.

From St. Vincent we stretched right across the ocean for Monte Video, and, during this part of our voyage, we settled upon our course of action. We were warned by Don Felix, or Willis, as we had now learned to call him, to be careful in conversation with our fellow-passengers. "There may be no Paraguayans among them," he said, "but there are Portefios and Orientales, who have intercourse with Asuncion, and our secret may travel very quickly. Sport must be the declared object of our journey, both here and up there; but, notwithstanding every precaution, we may still find it difficult to hoodwink the Paraguayans. They are a cautious and suspicious people, and for years their rulers have inculcated a system of *espion-*

nage. In Lopez's time every man was a spy on his neighbour, and while they are conversing with you, apparently with the greatest frankness, they are weighing every word that you say, and will take an early opportunity, for reporting the conversation to their superiors." So we kept a good deal together, and found employment in arranging our plans, and sketching out our route.

Charley's health had greatly improved since we left England, but still it was a great point to save his strength as much as possible, and to do this Willis advised us to use the water-way, the River Paraguay, so far as it could serve our purpose. He recommended that we should go up to Concepcion, a town situated in lat. $23^{\circ}24'$ S. and long. $57^{\circ}30'$ W., 200 miles above Asuncion. "From there," he said, "we can follow one or other of the roads that the Brazilians took, in making their final attack on Lopez, until we fall upon the Chiriguele road, along which he had been making his retreat."

After we crossed the line, it grew colder every day, for we were running into winter; and very shortly, out of regard for Rayne's health, we had to give up our pleasant evenings on deck, and confine ourselves much more to the saloon, where our confidential intercourse was to some extent restricted. It became bitterly cold as we ran along the coast off Rio Grande and Maldonado, and we were very glad to find our-

selves at anchor in Monte Video, the terminus of our ocean voyage.

Between Rio Janeiro on the Atlantic, and Callao on the Pacific, there is not in the whole length of the coast one single harbour of refuge, or one dockyard where a vessel of any size can be repaired.

For such a harbour, and for extensive dockyards, Monte Video is remarkably adapted by its natural position ; and, in the hands of any other people than the Orientales, as they are generally called, and under any other Governments, than those which have misgoverned them, since the country was unfortunately declared independent, such works would have been long ago constructed, and Monte Video would have become the most important town and port, of South America.

Scarcely a century and a half has passed, since the city was founded by the Spaniards, and peopled with emigrants from the Canary Islands. To these were added some thousands of Guarani Indians, who built the old fort ; and in course of time came the Brazilians, who have been twice, the owners of the country. Later on, it became a great resort for the superfluous population of Naples, and for numerous Basques, Gallegos (from Galicia, Spain), English, and Irish. One half of the inhabitants are foreigners, and the other half is a mixture of the nations already enumerated, with a very considerable element of negro blood. From this latter half, and, as regards honesty,

and respectability, from its very lowest stratum, the governing powers are not selected, but created.

A *paisano*, a *gaucho* is enrolled for military service, according to the laws of the constitution, or perhaps condemned to it, for murder or some other crime, equally in accordance with those laws. In his new life, he displays the courage or recklessness, common to savages in general, namely a carelessness of his own life, and a total disregard for the lives of his opponents. Probably he can neither read nor write, but he can always bluster, swagger with his sword, and draw his revolver on the very slightest provocation. A successful mutiny against his immediate chief, gives him a command ; and then follows a successful revolution, which makes him President of the nation.

His first duty is to himself and his family ; he possesses no means, and he naturally seizes the opportunity for enriching himself, and his nearest friends and relatives. Soldiers must be paid in cash because they are his supporters, and the maintenance of his position depends upon the army ; but as for Government officials, judges, custom-house officers, clerks, and the rest, surely they are amply remunerated with the bribes paid to them by suitors, plaintiffs, and shippers ; and if any balance be due, they must accept the paper money of a forced internal loan.

A President of Uruguay does not usually survive his term of office, and his career frequently terminates abruptly. He is shot down in the public streets, or

is found on the ramparts with his throat cut ; and this result is by no means an unbecoming death for a chief magistrate of the Republic.

To *degollar*, or *cut throats*, as applied to human beings, is happily not a custom among civilized nations, but in Uruguay it is so natural that it has been termed, by persons holding high official positions, *the violin* from the resemblance that the operation of the knife on a man's throat, has to the action of the bow on a fiddle. By whom the science was first instituted in South America, it is difficult to ascertain, but it is hardly fair to charge the Spaniards with its introduction, for the Conquistadores in Peru and Mexico, simply struck down the defenceless Indians with their swords, or ran them through with the lance. Nor were the aborigines themselves addicted to the use of the knife ; they used the lance, the bow, the lazo, and the boleadores, but their system of fighting was not adapted to the active employment of a short blade. The use of the knife, for purposes of murder and execution, appears to be of comparatively modern date, and to be chiefly confined to the districts of the River Plate. When markets were opened out for the sale of hides of bullocks and horses, and for the skins of sheep, it became necessary to find some speedy method for supplying them, and nothing was easier than to drive the living animals into the slaughtering pen, and to cut their throats ; and when, in course of time, the population increased, and discord and civil wars arose,

what method could be more simple to the victors, for getting rid of their defeated opponents, than to drive the human beings to a pen or corral, and there to cut their throats?

Revolutions and civil wars appear happily to have ceased on the right, or Argentine, side of the river, and with them the frightful use of the knife is dying out; but in Uruguay it still finds ample employment. Quite recently there was an abortive attempt against the Government. Many of the defeated party escaped, but many also were captured. Doubtless they were in rebellion against the established authorities, and probably they were traitors to their country; in both cases they were amenable to the laws, and might have been punished capitally. They *were* punished capitally, but not by sentence of any court of justice; they were never brought to trial, but there and then were "pasados por el cuchillo."

The operation is performed in three movements: one, "echese al suelo," is the word of command, and the poor wretch, with his arms pinioned, obeys, or is forced down on his face; two, and the executioner seizes him by the beard, if he has one, or by the chin if he is beardless; three—But halt! I can go no further.

I have said that such is the fitting end of a President of the "Republica Oriental del Uruguay," but such a suggestion is too terrible. The cord, the garotte, the guillotine, the platoon, even the blowing

from guns, are means employed by civilized nations for the elimination of rebels and murderers, but such means are in most cases employed under the sanction of some judicial body, civil or military. Can anyone imagine a judicial sentence, "Take that man and cut his throat!" And yet such an order is by no means uncommonly made by some tyrant, or *caudillo*, who has temporarily got the upper hand.

But in spite of the banditti who rule and pillage the country, in spite of the army of ruffians who raised them to power, and will keep them there so long as it suits their purpose, the population and the commerce of Uruguay increase rapidly, and its chief city, Monte Video, is constantly growing in area and importance. The capital is admirably situated on a promontory, on two sides of which the Atlantic is constantly breaking. On the west is the bay, comparatively quiet but very muddy, and not by any means safe; and on the north can still be traced the old wall, which formerly separated the city, from the mainland. The promontory itself, and an area now extending a mile into the interior, are divided into blocks of houses, each one, one hundred yards square, and between these blocks, and along all the principal streets, are laid the tramways. The cars give a life to the city which formerly did not exist, for the only traffic before their introduction was carried on by glass coaches, few and far between, for passengers; and for goods, by mule carts, which kept chiefly to

the water-side, and were seldom seen in the heart of the town.

The Calle del veinte-cinco de Mayo (Street of the 25th May, the date of the Revolution of Buenos Ayres, 1810) is lined with handsome shops, the owners of which are chiefly French, and the goods exposed to view are principally Parisian. Our only purchases were Panama hats, of finely-plaited grass, so supple that they may be doubled up and put into one's pocket, but so strong that they will bear any amount of rough usage. They are said to last a lifetime, and as the price per hat is a gold ounce, or say £3 5s., they certainly ought to be durable.

Nearer to the water-side, and beyond the fashionable district we found several ship-chandlers' stores, where we bought the many items that were still wanting to complete our kit, and having finished all our arrangements, we paid a last visit to the noble vessel that had brought us across the ocean, and transferred our effects to the steamer, which was to carry us up to Asuncion. In her there was no line of beauty, no symmetry, but she was exceedingly well adapted for river-travelling, and her cabins were airy and convenient. On an immense decked barge, a pile of buildings of wood and glass, two-stories high, is built up, and the huge mass is driven by paddles, worked by a walking-beam engine placed in the stern, at a considerable distance from the saloon, and, conse-

quently, there is but little noise and inconvenience from its action.

We left Monte Video at sunset, and darkness came on quickly, with rain and wind, and every prospect of a stormy night. From shore to shore the mouth of the Plate is upwards of 150 miles broad, and I can never understand why it is called a river, except that the water, in place of being clear and green, is muddy and brown ; to all intents and purposes it is a sea, and, when it blows, a very nasty one too.

A gale was coming on, but before it reached its strength, the dinner bell was sounding, and our party, well seasoned to sea-life, sat down contentedly ; but the majority of our fellow-passengers, less accustomed to travelling by water, failed to put in an appearance. The rivalry between the several steamers trading between Monte Video and Buenos Ayres, at the time of our visit, was so great, that every possible means was adopted to compete successfully, and to get a monopoly of the traffic, by outbidding one another in the special advantages they offered to passengers. We were told that, after fares had been reduced to so low a point as to render any profit entirely out of the question, the owners of one steamer, in order to beat its opponents off the water, not only offered to carry passengers free and gratis, but to give them a good dinner into the bargain.

We did not derive so much benefit from the current rivalry as this, for we paid a fare though a mod-

erate one, but the inducements held out to us were a French cook, and a flow of champagne. The latter we did not try, but the dinner was excellent, and we never had any reason for complaining of the food, on the whole journey to Asuncion.

The night was very stormy, but we arrived safely in the Inner Roads of Buenos Ayres, early in the morning of a cold mizzling day. It was a miserable outlook when Charley and I left the saloon, and stepped on to the balcony which runs all round the deck, to witness the arrival alongside of the first shore-boat. Willis was already outside, and as the boat approached, we saw him making signs to some one aboard of her.

The purser, or, as he is called, the *comisario*, handed down his report to the harbour authorities, and in a few seconds the usual formalities had been complied with, and then from the boat one of the occupants quietly stepped on deck, and was met by Willis at the gangway. Willis, so to speak, took him to his arms. There was nothing effusive or displeasing in his action, but he embraced him. He quietly put his right arm over the new-comer's left shoulder, and his left under his right arm, while he spoke some words of welcome, in a language which was neither English nor Spanish. The other accepted the embrace but did not return it; he said something in reply, and then an idea suddenly struck me, and turning to Rayne, I said :

"This must be Pepe, Willis's servant in Paraguay."

"Pepe!" said Charley, "why he was a boy; just look at that fine fellow, he would do for a guardsman."

"Very likely, but ten years make a difference, and I bet you cocktails that is Pepe."

"Well, perhaps you are right, and so I will not bet, but let us go and find out."

As we stepped forward Willis came to meet us.

"This is Pepe," he said, "the lad who was with me in Paraguay. I told him that I was coming south, and he has come to meet me. I think he may be of great service to us."

Charley held out his hand to shake Pepe's, while he said:

"If this is a specimen of the lads of Paraguay, what are the men like?"

Willis laughed; he always had a kindly smile for Rayne, and seemed to watch every phase in his character.

"Ah," he replied, "I had forgotten all the years that have passed, and Pepe's presence brings up a long stream of recollections. He has grown older, but otherwise he is the same to me."

The man, of whom he spoke, was about 30 years of age. Comparing him with Willis, I calculated that he was nearly six feet in height, and his shoulders were broad in proportion. I remembered the description that Willis had given of him, and I noticed that his

eyes were blue, and that his hair was curly and brown, but what struck me, and what Willis had never mentioned, was the honest look in his eyes and the gentle, kindly expression of his whole face.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EXTINCTION OF THE GAUCHO.

THE arrival of Pepe (it seems odd to call a grown man by a diminutive, but we followed the example of his old master) brought us back to Paraguay, and to the business that had led us so far. Willis explained that, when we resolved to make the expedition, he had immediately written to Pepe to be prepared to accompany him, and, it further appeared that in his quiet unostentatious way, he had made other arrangements, equally practical and useful.

"I can trust Pepe," he said, "but I do not want any more Paraguayans. He has found, however, three companions, two of them Argentines, gauchos, who will take care of our horses, and one an Indian from the Upper Paraná, whose services may prove of the greatest value. That we are bound on a sporting expedition is all that Pepe has told them, but he says that they are to be trusted, and my agent here has given me satisfactory reports as to their characters. And, by-the-bye, Penistone," he added, addressing himself to me, "while you were out of town, before we

left home, I wrote about some horses and mules, and they are coming on board almost immediately ; I hope that I have done rightly."

I thanked him for his thoughtfulness, and my mind wandered back to the time when he must have written his letter, and when I was basking in the smiles of my *new relation*, Grace ; and that reminded me that here in Buenos Ayres, I had a duty to perform, and a promise to fulfil, namely, to make a search for Alice Granton. But we were only to remain twenty-four hours in the port, and not much could be done in that time, so I determined to defer the matter until our return from Paraguay. Partly in imagination, and partly in fact the mist had cleared a little, and I felt lighter and, happier as we stepped into the boat to go ashore. Perhaps that passing recollection of Grace had re-animated me.

I should think it would take a long, long time to eradicate the first impressions of Buenos Ayres from the minds of people landing under similar circumstances to ours, even if they intended to make the city their home ; and to us, mere birds of passage, no words seemed suitable to describe the treachery and inhospitality, shown to new arrivals. That is what it really amounts to. If an innkeeper on the banks of the Thames places a landing stage of a character so slippery, and so dangerous that you can only reach his house at the greatest personal risk, you would hardly

think him, or his inn, worthy of your patronage, and you have exactly the same feeling towards Buenos Ayres and its inhabitants, when you make your first attempt to land. The draught of water of our steamer could be stated in inches instead of feet, but yet she could not go along side a landing stage, so we had to get into a wet whale-boat. Even for her, there was not sufficient water at the foot of the pier steps, and we were transferred to a cart, of the shape and size used in London, for carrying bricks. In this we reached the ruined flight, of which every other step is wanting, and, by hauling on the iron rail, we at length arrived on the pier, or mole. But here our difficulties only seemed to grow greater. We had, before arriving on *terra firma*, to walk along some 400 yards of planking, which form the deck of the pier. The timber is urunduary, one of the hardest woods to be found in all the country, a wood which no traffic wears into holes, but which becomes polished with constant friction, like a bar of iron by the application of sand-paper. In the best and driest of weathers it is slippery, and on a wet day it is like glass or ice. A stick or umbrella can afford but little assistance, for there is a considerable space between the planks ; but, like an alpine staff, it serves to point out the dangerous spots, of which there are many ; some of them where a plank is loose, others where the planking has entirely disappeared, leaving a large open hole.

The wood will last for ever, but the nails get rusted

and break, and nothing is left to hold the flooring in its place.

Before we reached the land end, Charley had measured his length on the hard timber, and I had been down twice, so we both felt fully justified in using strong language about this *mole*, which was considered when first erected, some thirty years ago, a most wonderful structure. The repairs and botching that have gone on during its existence, must have cost more than a decent pier that would afford a good foothold, and could be extended into deeper water. But at length we reached the land, and breakfast at the Café de Paris made amends for the hardships we had endured.

The *peje rey* is a delicious fish, and in Buenos Ayres they cook it to perfection. Here it is similar to, and about the size of, a smelt, but in the waters higher up it is sometimes eighteen inches in length. South American beef and mutton, as brought to England in a frozen condition, are regarded with a little suspicion, but, eaten in their native land, they can bear comparison with the finest English or Scotch meat. Both cattle and sheep are purely grass-fed, and to that fact is, I believe, due the savoury taste of the meat, which turnips, cake, and other artificial foods, would only tend to destroy.

The city is full of life and trade, and I might add, noise. The tramways occupy one-half of every street, leaving room for only one vehicle to pass, for the

streets are very narrow, as are also the footpaths, and to this narrowness, I imagine, is due to some extent the impression that we formed, of the excessive business of the place. The crush seemed like that of London or Liverpool, but the area is smaller and the people are crowded more closely together. Traffic would be completely stopped but for the police regulations, which oblige vehicles going out of the town to proceed by one street, and to return by a parallel one.

In one respect the Porteños are more advanced than we are. We have adopted the telephone to some extent, and use it for business purposes, but there, in nearly every private residence, the instrument is to be found in constant use, as well as in all public and private offices.

Buenos Ayres is very different to Monte Video; besides being three times as large, it has a vast goods traffic through its very centre, instead of only around it. Strings of carts mount up the steep inclines from the water's edge laden with wine and other imports, which they deliver *en route*, and then return from the western and southern confines of the city with hides, wool, and wheat.

But a very few years ago flour was imported from Chili to make bread for the inhabitants, now they are exporting largely, and will shortly prove formidable rivals to the United States of America and to India, in supplying the European markets with wheat.

The early stage of civilization, that of tending vast

herds of horned cattle, and of taming wild horses, has, for some time, been giving way to the breeding of sheep and the production of wool ; and this industry which comparatively *emollit mores*, has now to make room for the steam-plough and the threshing-machine ; for the cultivation of the soil, and for the rearing of crops.

The evolution in the manners and habits of a nation, contingent on the change in the nature of its employment, is worthy of remark as regards the Argentine Republic, and especially in connection with its most important province, that of Buenos Ayres. Cattle breeding requires wide, and extensive pasture lands, ample room, not only for the animals to feed, but also for their exercise and freedom of action ; and the breeder quickly ceases to regard as any great offence the trespassing of his cattle on the property of his neighbours ; nay more, should there be found among his own herd, a stray bullock just ready for the knife, he does not look upon it as a crime, even if a joint finds its way to his own table, and if the beast's hide be sent to market with his own lot.

It was a give-and-take system. " My neighbour kills my cattle if he finds them on his land, and therefore I kill his, if I find them straying on mine ; " but it is difficult to defend it, and if such an example was set by the *estancieros* (the proprietors), what was likely to be the practice of their followers ?

The capture of wild cattle, and of still wilder horses

demands the employment of mounted men ; a peon on the open prairie is useless against the rush of a full-grown stallion, and is only an encumbrance in a foray on wild cattle. And so arose a class of men who have been designated by the name of gauchos, and who became the domineering power in the *campo*, or open country. The gaucho's claim to that power, was not without some foundation. In his own way, and to a small extent, he was a capitalist. At first a peon, that is to say a footman, he bought, borrowed, or stole a horse ; and then another, and another, until at length he possessed a *tropilla*, or collection of five or six horses, bound by affection to a bell-mare, from whom they never strayed. Thus he was his own master ; if cited in the east, to give compulsory military service, he rode away to the west ; if wanted for some crime committed in the north, with his *tropilla* in front, he took a southerly course. If a good workman, and with his horses in fair condition he was pretty sure to find employment, and when tired or dissatisfied, he collected his animals and rode elsewhere. Honestly treated, and with a tight hand kept upon him, such a man could be trusted to do a hard day's work on horseback, and to give satisfaction to his employer, but in heart he was a Communist, and was always amenable to the bribes of any *caudillo*, or adventurer, who attempted a revolution against the ruling powers.

When wild cattle had been tamed, when wild horses

no longer roamed over the prairies, the market value of the gaucho was greatly reduced ; when lands were fenced in, his erratic career met with many obstacles ; when sheep were introduced, it was found that the gentle Saxon was a better caretaker than the mounted Gaucho ; when the locomotive rushed in all directions north and south, east and west, then his horses were of no avail, either to carry him to other fields of employment, or to save him from the consequences of any crime ; and when at length the very ground on which he had chased wild horses, was ploughed up to grow corn and wheat, then the gaucho's occupation was gone. A great change in the character of the people must follow on the extinction of his class, and even physically a difference will be seen. He had no home no domestic ties, and his food was beef, nothing but beef, without even the addition of bread or vegetables. But the shepherd, or the agricultural labourer must have a fixed residence ; he will be glad to have a family to assist him in his work, and he will grow cereals and vegetables, to maintain his household. The labourer on foot will perhaps be less free and independent than his mounted predecessor, but he will also be less savage, and less inclined to use his knife on every occasion.

As a field for immigration this country offers advantages, some of which are even greater than those to be obtained in our Australian Colonies. In the vast expanse of pasture land, they are

similar ; but in Australia there are periods in the year when everything is dried up, when not a green leaf nor a blade of grass is left, on which the cattle and sheep can eke out an existence ; a condition of affairs that the River Plate scarcely ever presents. The sun is powerful, but not so scorching as in Australia, and in the worst of times, food sufficient to maintain life is found in the *cardo*, or giant thistle, and in other similar plants. To many an exile, the consideration that he is only severed from home, by half the distance, must also be a matter of satisfaction ; he possesses the advantages of more speedy communication by post or telegraph, and at much cheaper rates ; and when he wishes to visit the old country, or to return home for good, his passage money is only half, what it would cost from Australia.

It is often said, however, that the difference in language and religion, are drawbacks to the settlement of Englishmen in the River Plate. The difficulty that is supposed to exist, on account of this difference, is greatly exaggerated. English, Irish, and Germans are found scattered all over the camp, and thus all inconvenience owing to the new-comer's ignorance of Spanish is avoided ; even among the natives, English, which is taught in most of the schools, is frequently spoken ; and, moreover, Spanish is so easy a language, especially to anyone who possesses a knowledge of Latin, that within a very few months a person of ordinary ability could make himself understood, and

become independent of an interpreter. As to the question of religion, it is hardly worthy of discussion. There is absolute toleration, and it might just as well be said, that no one should go to India, because the majority of the population are Hindoos.

Strolling through this great city of the New World, we came across a fine corner building, the London and River Plate Bank, and I remembered that it was to this establishment that the remittances to Major Granton had been made. I entered, and was politely received; and in reply to my inquiries, the manager informed me that no application had ever been made for the reward offered, for the discovery of the missing English lady.

We dined at the Café Catalan, passed the evening at the opera-house—the Colon, and slept at the Hôtel de Provence.

The steam-pipe was blowing frantically next morning, when we reached the side of our steamer, and at one o'clock we started on our journey.

The class of passengers seemed to have changed very greatly from those whom we had brought up from Monte Video. Some few still accompanied us, but the majority of the broadcloth gentlemen had remained at Buenos Ayres, or had proceeded by the numerous railways which branch out, in all directions, from the city, to the interior of the Province. Their places had been supplied by a few Brazilians bound to Matto Grosso, above the confines of Para-

guay, some Corrientinos and Entrerianos, and a considerable number of Paraguayans. A few of these were of an upper class and held tickets for the saloon, but the majority were women who travelled as steerage passengers, and who had brought down hand-made hammocks of native cotton, *bandutay* lace (the design of which is the spider's web), cigars of *peté pará* tobacco, demijohns of refined *caña*, water-bottles of coarse pottery from Itá, rolls of *curupai* bark for dyeing, boxes of *almidon de mandioca* (a white flour in great demand for the most delicate confectionery), little *sobornales* of the finest yerba-maté, oranges which are unsurpassed by those of any other country, gold puzzle rings, and numerous other trifles which do not occupy any great space, but which find a ready sale in Buenos Ayres. Each woman is probably the representative, or agent of a dozen others, who, on the co-operative system, entrust to her the work of twelve months for sale down the river, whence she brings back shawls and dresses, and other female necessities and adornments.

The *equipaje*, or crew, is by no means large. First is the *comandante*, who has supreme control, but who does not navigate. He presides at the table, and attends generally to the comfort of his passengers and to making arrangements at the different ports of call, for freight on his return voyage. He is generally a foreigner, and in our case was a very pleasant,

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gentlemanly Spanish Basque. Next to him in position is the comisario, who takes the opposite end at the dinner-table, and who is equally attentive to the passengers. There is a mate, usually an English or American sailor ; an engineer invariably a Scotchman ; four quarter-masters, who in turns take the wheel in the bows ; and several stokers. These really compose the whole crew, but there are two other men, shipped each voyage, who are the most important officials on board, and on whom your safety and the length of the passage mainly depend. These are the pilots, one for day, and one for night work. One is always on duty, close to the steersman, conning the vessel under circumstances of the greatest difficulty. For his guidance he depends chiefly on landmarks, points and promontories, high rocks and shelving banks, and to these may be added the change in the colour of the water.

But in the short time that elapses between passing some specified landmark on the upward voyage, and again on the return, the whole features may have changed—a point has been carried away by the water, and there remains in its place a perpendicular embankment ; some well-known shoal seems to have disappeared, but higher up or lower down the stream another has been formed in its stead ; an easy channel is no longer navigable, and it becomes necessary to search for another passage. These changes are constant, and render the navigation very difficult, and but for

the good-fellowship that exists among the river pilots, it would be much more so. Whenever so great a variation was noticed, as would be likely to cause danger to a *confrère*, following us in another vessel, our pilot invariably stopped the steamer, jumped into a boat, and marked the dangerous spot with a buoy.

The Rio de la Plata has given its name to an enormous area comprising several distinct countries and Governments, and, as already stated, its *embouchure* is about 150 miles, and even at Buenos Ayres, 120 miles from Monte Video, it is 28 miles in breadth. It is usually spoken of as one of the great rivers of the world, but it has no length, and, for my part, I question generally its title to be called a river, and especially to be called the River of the Plate. If it has a name it is the *Paraná*. Twenty miles above Buenos Ayres the Plata ceases to exist, it becomes either the *Paraná* or the *Uruguay*, great rivers which join at Las Palmas, and flow through a frith or an estuary, vulgarly called the River Plate, to the ocean.

The first port at which we stopped was Rosario, capital (though not the seat of Government) of the Province of Santa Fé, a town which is becoming of enormous importance as being the river-side terminus of the Central Argentine Railway. We only remained two or three hours, and did not land, but here we picked up an additional recruit.

It is time that I should state how our party was composed. Charley was my first care, and was

causing me considerable anxiety, in which not only Willis participated, but also Pepe. His handsome face, his happy smile, and his invariable good-temper seemed to attract friends everywhere, no matter whether they were his own countrymen, or foreigners. Willis had drawn to him very strongly and Pepe was devoted. When we missed his cheerful voice and merry laugh, a gloom seemed to fall upon us all, and that unfortunately was the case at the present time. It is probable that he had undertaken too much during our short stay at Buenos Ayres. The sea voyage had certainly been most beneficial, and had so greatly improved his health, that he gave himself credit for greater strength than he really possessed. The sudden change of temperature from the warm air of the tropics, to the chilliness on the morning of our landing at Buenos Ayres, had had a bad effect, and probably on that occasion he had taken cold. At the time he had not noticed it, and had passed the day in walking about, and the evening at the opera, but this exertion had taxed him severely, and a reaction had set in. His bad cough and his depression had both returned.

Pepe, as already stated, had not come alone. During the years that had passed since he had parted from his old master Don Felix, he had been employed on an estancia in the Province of Buenos Ayres. His knowledge of cattle had been appreciated, and his honesty and probity had been fully recognized. In

spite of his Paraguayan origin he had been promoted to the position of *capataz*, or foreman, and, having been paid in kind, he was already the owner of a small herd of cattle. At his master's call, he at once gave notice to his employer and relinquished his position, but he had contracted certain friendships, and, although cautious and reserved, he spoke to two of the peóns of the estancia about his departure and its object, and they willingly agreed to accompany him to Paraguay, on the conditions that he had been empowered to offer by Don Felix.

The friendship that existed between Pepe, and one of his companions, could be easily accounted for. He was equally good-tempered, and just as quiet and reticent. His name was Estanislado, a tall dark man, without an ounce of spare flesh, but with large limbs, and great muscular power—a type of the better class of gaucho ; but how Pepe could have picked up with the other one it is difficult to say. What his real name was I never heard, but he was always called *Carancho*, a name which in all probability had been applied to him, on account of the similarity of his nose, to the beak of a vulture. He was one of the ugliest specimens of humanity that I ever saw. This long sharp nose, his most remarkable feature, was placed in the middle of a round red face, deeply marked with small-pox, to which terrible disease was also due the partial loss of one eye and the contraction of the other one ; so that he invari-

ably squinted. Of this unfortunate defect he made very light, and on one occasion he remarked, "Tengo los ojos como zapatos cambiados" (My eyes are like shoes transposed), that is to say like putting the right shoe on the left foot and *vice versa*, by no means a bad simile for inverted vision. He was short in stature, but broad in the shoulders ; his legs were bandy, but strong and thick. He was said to be one of the finest *domadores*, or rough riders, in the country, and the grip of his knees was so great, that by their simple pressure he could make a horse squeal with agony. He had no clothes but those that he carried on his person, and yet he was not in poverty, for his *tirador*, or broad belt, was covered with buttons made of silver dollars ; the handles of his revenque (whip) and puñal (long-knife) were of the same metal, and his poncho was of the finest vicuña, worked by Indian hands and worth at least its weight in silver. His only other piece of property was a guitar, and he constantly had a círculo around him, listening to his rude music, and applauding his gaucho doggerel. He had many quaint and witty sayings, and notwithstanding his ugliness, which at first sight was repellent, he became an universal favourite, and attached himself especially to my humble self.

The addition made to our party at Rosario was a recruit enlisted by Pepe, and accepted by Willis. He was a pure-blooded Indian, rather a well-made

man, with dark complexion, and long coarse black, lustreless hair falling over his shoulders, and kept off his face by a fillet fastened round the forehead. I asked Pepe to what tribe he belonged, and he replied "He is a Mamelus," and could give me no further explanation, so I addressed my inquiries to Willis. He smiled when I asked him where the tribe of Mamelus was to be found, and told me that there was no such tribe. "Mamelus," he said, "is the same word as Mamelukes. Centuries ago, in the early times of the Jesuits, bands of outlaws used to collect in the Province of San Paulo in Brazil, and make raids on the Missions along the Upper Paraná, and into Paraguay itself. Many of them were *cimarones*, or run-away slaves, and to these bands the Jesuits gave the name of Mamelukes, because in habits they resembled the people who were so designated in Egypt. It is still sometimes used as a term of opprobrium and reproach, to the people on the Brazilian Frontier, and this is how Pepe used it. But this man is, I believe, a Caioa from the Brazilian Province of Paraná. He speaks the *lingoa geral*, or Tupi-Guarani language, and may be useful to us if we come across the Indians; and, besides that, he is a good hand with a canoe. It is extraordinary to meet with one of his tribe so far south, they seldom come below Corrientes."

After leaving Rosario we passed the Convent of San Carlos, generally known as that of San Lorenzo

founded by the Jesuits in the early days of the Spanish settlement. It is said to contain a mine of literary gold, and if any future historian should write an account of the Guaranis, the largest aboriginal nation of South America, it is probable that he would here find ample material.

The journey between Rosario and Paraná is dull and sombre. The river runs between Santa Fé, a province now being covered with colonies, which are not, however, seen from the river, on the right bank, and Entre Rios on the left ; but it is narrow and bordered on both sides by lofty precipices, perforated with millions of holes made by green parrots, which prevented the sun's rays from falling on our decks.

The City of Paraná (355 miles from Buenos Ayres) stands far back from the river, from which it is approached by a very steep road. It is a large town in Entre Rios, and at one time was the capital of the Argentine Confederation, that is to say, it was the seat of Government, and to supply residences for the officials and foreign ministers, a number of buildings were erected. Here for some years the Legations vegetated ; the only name applicable to the life they passed, without any society beyond their own circle (which by-the-bye included the present Sir Edward Thornton, late Ambassador to Russia, and his amiable wife), and without shops, or places of amusement.

The appearance of the river completely changed shortly after passing Paraná. The monotony of the

high banks ceases, and it becomes a broad shallow expanse, covered with islands which form innumerable channels. The navigation is very difficult, for everywhere there are sunken rocks, and the current runs with very great force. But these obstacles rather serve to increase the interest of the passengers, for the steamer has to cross and re-cross the river, and they are now close to the bank on one side, passing almost under the overhanging trees, and shortly afterwards are hugging the shore on the other.

Up to this point there had been but little life. With the exception of diver birds, which followed in our wake, and now and then a carancho, we seemed to have been the only living objects on the swift, silent river, but standing one-legged on the shore, and glancing in the sun, we could now see the mirasol ; king-fishers of a greenish colour and red swallows were flying about, and amongst them dashed a few scissor-tailed falcons ; mottled gulls dotted the water, while crows sat listlessly on the trees, and pigeons flew through the foliage on the bank. As we passed along there was frequently a splash, as a *nutria* took a "header" on our approach. I hardly know how to describe a *nutria*, but should like to learn more about him. He is neither an otter nor a seal ; his colour is reddish brown, his head round, his eyes soft and kindly, and his whiskers bushy. When sitting on his haunches, he has the appearance of a small kangaroo, and he uses his fore-paws like a monkey. His

tail is his worst feature, for it is long and hairless, and very like a rat's. In fact, I fear, that the nutria is nothing more than a big water-rat, and I am sorry for it, for he is excessively intelligent, and, when captured young, becomes an amusing domestic pet.

Now and then we sighted a caiman lying on the mud-bank. The pilots, to whom we appealed on all occasions for information, called them *yacarés*, the Guarani term. They must sleep with one eye open, for they always entered the water long before we reached them. But the greatest excitement was caused by the swimming of a *yaguareté* (a jaguar, or American tiger) across our bows, some distance ahead. There was a rush to the cabins for rifles, but he reached the shore before a shot was fired, and we saw him creep up the bank and disappear in the forest.

We touched at La Paz, on the confines of the Province of Corrientes, and then at Esquina, a town of 2,000 inhabitants, built on the River Corrientes, at its junction with the Paraná. From Esquina our vessel crossed the river to the mouth of the San Javier, out of which came travelling down to meet us, with all the noise and self-importance of a gun-boat, a little Yarrow steam-launch, bearing the manager of the Alexandra Colony, in search of letters from Europe and Buenos Ayres. The Alexandra Colony was founded some ten or twelve years ago by a firm of London merchants, who obtained a concession from the Provincial Government of Santa Fé. At the outset it

was unfortunate, for it was placed on a territory claimed by the Indians, who resented the intrusion of foreigners. With a natural instinct they "lifted" cattle whenever an opportunity occurred, and the colonists retaliated. Frequent skirmishes followed, one of which cost the life of Mr. Weguelin, an enterprising English gentleman, who is always said to have done his best to cultivate friendly relations with the Indians. Some time after his death a detachment of Argentine troops was sent to afford protection to the colony, which is now said to be thriving, and likely to prove successful. Mention is made by several of the old Jesuit writers of the Abiponians, a Mocobi nation of mounted warriors, who inhabited the Chaco, and the Indians in the neighbourhood of the colony are horsemen; but I have seen a specimen of the opponents of the settlement, a lad of about six or seven years old, who was captured in one of the forays, and adopted by the Rev. Canon Dillon, a distinguished member of the British clergy in Buenos Ayres, and commonly called the "Irish Chaplain General."

This gentleman informed me that the boy was a Toba; but whatever his tribe, he must certainly have belonged to a ferocious family. A fine sturdy, tawny, little beggar, with the black lustreless hair common to all Indians, but, in his case, cut short, and in consequence displaying another remarkable feature of his countrymen, viz., the

pointedness of the top of the head. He showed considerable intelligence ; clinging to the good Canon, for whom he appeared to have formed a warm attachment, he purred with pleasure like a kitten ; but separated from him, and when addressed by a stranger, he growled like a tiger. And there was another similarity between him and the feline race : his great teeth, out of all proportion to his size, were white, hard-set, and pointed like a jaguar's, made to tear and not to masticate. On one occasion he put them to use, and took a piece of flesh very neatly out of the shoulder of a man, who had annoyed him. What became of his *bonne bouche* I never heard.

The stream grows narrower above Esquina, but after proceeding some twenty miles it suddenly opens out into one vast lake. There came to my mind as we entered on this wide expanse of water, that feeling which I think other travellers must have experienced when, journeying slowly through the Suez Canal, they suddenly burst upon the Bitter Lake. After hearing for hours nothing but the signals to the engine-room, "ease her !" "stop her !" now comes the grateful one of "full speed ahead !" and the ship quivers as she dashes forward in the hope of passing some vessel that, up to this time, has barred her way in the narrow channel, and of taking a more leading position when the canal is again entered. But there is this difference, that the big lake on the Paraná is

studded with islands, rich in foliage of many colours, and surrounded by dense forests instead of sand-hills.

We called at Goya and Bella Vista, villages on the left bank, of no importance in themselves, but charmingly situated amidst tropical foliage. And now we have entered on the waters which witnessed many of the sanguinary engagements between the Paraguayans and Brazilians, the history of which has been so cleverly told by Sir Richard Burton in his "Letters from the Battle Fields of Paraguay."

Corrientes is a city containing some 15,000 inhabitants, who are all coloured—not black, but yellowish brown—in fact "chinas," a name applied in the River Plate, to everyone of mixed blood.

The 600 to 700 miles that we had travelled in about four days had made a great change. We had left Buenos Ayres complaining of the damp and cold, and now we had to seek shelter from a burning sun. Although the season was autumn, everything was green and fresh, and the foliage luxuriant. Palm trees abound; orange trees are found in the streets and plazas, and the hedges round the town are formed of gigantic aloes. The framework of almost every house is wood, in some cases filled with brick-work, but in the poorer tenements the walls are of wattle. Rain falls heavily here, and the roofs

are very sloping, and covered with tiles or split palms.

Between Corrientes and Asuncion, there is considerable trade and intercourse, both by land and water. By land, herds of cattle are driven up to fatten on the rich pasturage grounds of Paraguay; and by water, during the season, numbers of Corrientinos travel to the yerba districts to collect the crop for the markets of Buenos Ayres and Monte Video.

I do not know whether it was fancy, or whether there is any marked change between the two rivers, but certainly we all felt brighter and happier, as we passed the Tres Bocas, and ran out of the Paraná into Paraguayan waters. Perhaps the great improvement in Rayne's health inspirited us, and, for my part, I had the additional satisfaction of knowing that I was at length approaching the land, which for many months, had been the object of my thoughts and dreams.

I think it is Commander Page, in his book on "La Plata," who has compared the verdant banks sloping down to the water's edge, on the lower part of the Paraguay, to the parks which are to be found all over England, and this description seemed to us singularly accurate. Every now and then there was a break in the thick line of trees and shrubs bordering the river, and through this we could see from the steamer's deck, a long green glade of park-like land, gently

rising from the water's edge, and bordered on both sides by lordly trees. Once or twice we discerned animals grazing or moving across the open, and the pilot assured us that they were *guazú*, the Guarani name for deer. It was very probable, for the district seemed full of life. We saw numbers of *yacaré*, or caimans, basking on the mud, and for the first time we made acquaintance with the *capibará*, or carpincho, a big, bristly water-pig. That evening, too, as we were sitting in the bows star-gazing, we had another experience. There was suddenly a "whirr" of wings in front of us, then came a thud against the front of the cabin, and three white objects were sprawling on the deck. "Ipég," said the pilot; and so they were. Three good-sized black ducks, with white wings; and in the saloon were two more that had flown through the broad open doors, and were captured by the stewards. The flock had been flying down stream, and was attracted by the lights of our vessel, those on the higher deck being probably on the same level as their line of flight. The next morning we passed the Monte Lindo (beautiful forest) and Villeta, a little village nestling among orange-groves, and guarded by palm trees standing like gigantic sentinels; then under Lambaré, a tall conical hill, covered to its top with foliage; a hill still held sacred by the Indians, whose antecessors suffered here one of their greatest defeats by the advancing Spaniards; and three miles above this, we enter the broad bend of the

river, on which is situated the "City of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin." * *etc.*

* In giving its full title to the capital, I am reminded of an incident that occurred in a London law-court, some years ago. The action was in relation to Paraguayan matters. Mr. Murphy, Q.C., an Irish gentleman and a Catholic, was counsel for the plaintiff, and the late Mr. Benjamin, Q.C., a member of the Hebrew faith, for the defendants. Mr. Murphy, in his address to the jury, persisted in calling the place "Ascension," and at length Mr. Benjamin, who, above all things, was correct in details, expostulated. "My learned brother," he said, "is confounding an island in the Atlantic with a city in South America, and the 'Ascension of the Lord' with the 'Assumption of the Virgin.'" The fact of the Jew correcting the Christian in a matter relating to the Holy Virgin, caused some amusement in court.

CHAPTER XIII.

PARAGUAY AND ITS CAPITAL.

WE had left Buenos Ayres at one o'clock on Sunday morning, and we hauled alongside the wharf at Asuncion, at about the same hour on the Friday. That is to say, that we had travelled about 200 miles per day, which was not bad considering the powerful current against us, and the frequent stoppages. At Buenos Ayres, nearly at the river's mouth, our steamer could not approach within some miles of the shore ; here, 1,000 miles inland, we step from the deck on to the quay. There is a large open space in front, and on our left is the Custom House, and looking along the river-side the eye falls upon a tall imposing building, the palace that Lopez commenced to build but never completed, then upon the Church of the Encarnacion, and almost in front, at a distance of about half a mile, is the cathedral. On our right at the water's edge are the arsenal and dock-yard, where before, and during, the war some heavy guns were turned out under the direction of English engineers, and several vessels of upwards of 200ft.

in length were built. Both have fallen into decay, but a steam brick factory established about the same time is still at work, and a building close at hand is occupied for the fabrication of artificial ice.

The town is prettily situated on the side of a hill sloping down to the river, and the colouring of the houses gives it a very pleasing appearance ; many of them are white, with roofs of red tiles, while others are flat-roofed, but painted blue or red, and among them are several modern ones of plain red brick. There are bits of green, plazas and gardens, in the very centre of town, and the tropical trees, and plants surrounding the city on two sides, form the framework of a pretty picture.

There was a plentiful supply of porters to take charge of our baggage, but they all seemed to be Italians or Basques.

Willis said to me, as we were leaving the steamer : "The Custom House examination may give us trouble, it all depends upon the officer in charge ; let me try and manage it, or our project may be discovered before we are well on shore."

It was an amusing scene, the said examination. It was made on the landing steps ; our trunks, saddles, and gun-cases were opened in the centre of an admiring crowd, at first consisting of the officials and porters, but soon increased by a number of loafers from the drinking booths, or *pulperias*, which cluster round the port, and these were joined by a phalanx

of women, who, until our arrival, had been washing clothes on the beach. Many of them carried children slung on their backs, and in the mouths of mother and baby, were long black cigars. To these were added several gentlemen in white clothing and straw hats, who had heard of the steamer's arrival, and had come down to the port for the latest news. They saluted us politely, and we soon found among them one or two friends, to whom we had letters. An introduction to one served as an introduction to all, and we were quickly placed on the most intimate terms.

Meanwhile, Willis had evidently met a friend, for an affectionate embrace in Spanish fashion was exchanged between him and a Paraguayan, who appeared to hold an important position in the Customs. They conversed in Guarani for some minutes, and then the officer turned to his subordinates, who had just commenced to finger our property out of mere curiosity, and said the single word "*Basta!*" On hearing it, the porters rushed at the baggage, closed the wooden cases, and locked the trunks, and shouldering the whole lot, marched it off to a tram-car, which was standing ready-horsed, close at hand.

There are no public carriages in Asuncion, and, indeed, no other vehicles than rough bullock carts. I believe that there is a State carriage stowed away somewhere, which is brought to light now and then, in order to convey a Foreign Minister to his official reception, and there may be two or three others, the

property of rich Brazilians, which are used for journeys outside the town, but to drive in a carriage through the streets of Asuncion, would be a feat which would certainly end in the collapse of all the springs, and probably in that of the occupants. But there is a tramway running between the port and the railway, a distance of about a mile, through the principal street, the Calle de Asuncion, which supplies the want of other means of locomotion.

A sort of red iron rock-stone is the foundation of the streets ; where it is very hard, a point or little hillock is formed ; where it is softer, the ground is worn into a rut. There are natural springs almost everywhere, and rivulets running through the streets, which, during heavy rains become torrents. On one side of the street the ground has been levelled, and wooden sleepers laid for the tramway. The spaces between were filled in with sand, but this has either been drawn out by the horses' feet, or washed away by the rains, and the sleepers are perfectly uncovered. Over them, with great precision, the horses pick their way, and very cleverly they do it, seldom stumbling or making a false step.

One handsome building was pointed out to us during our passage, which is occupied by the National Bank of Paraguay. It was, I believe, commenced by one of the family of Lopez, who, at great expense, built a portico, entrance hall, and staircases of marble, but the war prevented its completion ; since then it has

been turned to commercial purposes, and is the finest modern building in Asuncion. A concession for the establishment of a bank was offered, we were told by our friends, some years ago to the English bondholders, but they rejected it ; it was then granted to an Argentine firm, who are now stated to be doing a most thriving business.*

The tramway landed us in front of the chief hotel, close to the cathedral, a large square, flat-roofed house ; a number of peóns transferred our baggage, and we quickly found ourselves accommodated in apartments both large and lofty, though somewhat scant of furniture.

In all my travels I have never met with greater hospitality and attention than that, with which our whole party was treated during our short stay at Asuncion. I remember how pained we were at being placed under an obligation, and yet pleased at his politeness to strangers, when the manager of the tramway politely declined to accept any fares, although we had occupied an entire car for our party, and probably had caused inconvenience to the permanent resident population. Whether it is the custom to treat all visitors on their first arrival in the same way I cannot say, but certain it is that from natives and foreigners we received the greatest courtesy. The foreign circle is small : there are Ar-

* The net profits, according to the latest report, were at the rate of nearly 60 per cent. per annum.

gentine, Oriental, Brazilian, Italian, and Spanish Legations, with a minister and secretary in each ; German, Swedish, and other consuls. We, British, are represented by a vice-consul, Dr. William Stewart, a Scotchman by birth, whose experience goes back to years before the war, and who is married to a Paraguayan lady ; and once a year the English Minister to the Argentine Confederation makes a visit to Paraguay, to whose Government he is also accredited, These gentlemen vied with one another in showing us attentions, and in the families of some of them we found the most charming and pleasant ladies' society.

Sheep do not thrive, and so mutton is seldom to be had in Asuncion, and with only one *pièce de résistance*, that of beef, there might be difficulty in arranging a dinner ; but those to which we were invited were exceedingly good, and always varied ; fish is excellent, and poultry and game abundant. I have still in my possession the *menu* of a dinner given in our honour, which commenced with whitebait. The *mojarra*, about the size of a sardine, is not exactly the little fish for which, in years gone by, one had to make an annual pilgrimage to Blackwall or to Greenwich, but it is an excellent substitute for it. We attended a picnic in the Chaco on the opposite side of the river (the right bank), and made daily excursions to the beautiful quintas scattered over the suburbs, to which their owners had invited us. Our horses had been landed in perfect condition, and our rides, when the

heat of the sun had passed, afforded incalculable pleasure, and taught us each day, a new lesson in the beauties and glories of tropical verdure.

The members of the Government and the native gentry were equally attentive. They do not follow the English custom of giving big dinner parties, but their houses are thrown open of an evening, and in their society we passed many a pleasant hour. We found among them ladies and gentlemen of courteous, pleasing manners, and of high cultivation.

Several of the Ministers had visited Europe, and some of them had been educated in Paris. The President of the Nation is a remarkable man in more than one respect. In person, though born in Paraguay and of native parents, he has all the appearance of a Saxon. Fair, blue-eyed, with auburn hair and beard, a commanding figure, and fine broad shoulders, he would, if dressed in the uniform, make an excessively handsome specimen of an English guardsman. But besides his good looks, he has other claims to attention, not only from his own countrymen, but from brothers-in-arms in all parts of the world. General Bernardino Caballero served through the five years' war from its commencement to its end, and is the one prominent survivor who has retained the love of his compatriots, and the respect of his opponents. What his abilities may be as a general, I cannot say, but, undoubtedly, as a cavalry officer he has seldom been surpassed in any part of the world

On one occasion, at least, he was confined within fortifications, and bravely defended them, but his chief exploits have been in the open field, at the head of his troopers, and there he won the admiration of the enemy by his dauntless courage, and his brilliant dash. *Le bon sabreur* of Paraguay, he possesses qualities which history has not accorded to his prototype, Murat, for he is modest and merciful. He has no tales to tell of his own deeds, but when at length he surrendered to the Brazilians, after the death of the Marshal, they showed their appreciation of his gallantry and of his character as a gentleman, by at once giving him his liberty in recognition of the chivalrous manner, in which he had behaved to the prisoners that he had captured during the war.

Some time before his accession to the Presidential Chair, Caballero had been in England in an official capacity, and had attended at several levées, Court balls, and other receptions. He always spoke gratefully of the attention that he had received from the chamberlains, masters of ceremonies, and Court officials, but he had seen another side of London as well, and was very fond of talking about it.

Anyhow, he entered fully into our sporting projects, and issued mandates and decrees that every facility should be afforded to us, and I believe that, notwithstanding all that afterwards happened, he did so in perfect good faith.

Under his auspices an expedition was made to the

Villa Hayes, a settlement in the Chaco, named after the President of the United States, who acted as arbitrator in determining the limits between the Argentine Confederation and Paraguay, and who gave a decision highly favourable to the latter. By this decision a territory as large, if not larger, than Paraguay proper, has been added to the Republic. The limits are undefined, for nothing is known of the interior, but the Chaco is bounded on the west by the Argentine Confederation, and on the north by Bolivia, wherever their lines of demarcation may be. The country on the right side, is lower than that of the left bank of the Paraguay, and is therefore more liable to inundation ; but the soil is extremely fertile, and the forests produce some of the very finest timber. The Indians are at present too close to the river, and frequently give trouble, but, as has happened in the Argentine Republic, they will in course of time be driven back, and the water frontage will soon be covered with colonies, like those now being founded in Santa Fé, lower down the river. With an eye to the future, several merchants of Buenos Ayres have already made large land-purchases in this district, and among them two English gentlemen are said to have acquired a magnificent territory.

Willis, or Don Felix, as he was again called by many of his old friends, took no great part in our festivities. He seemed to be regarded with a certain jealousy by the Paraguayans—he had been one of

them, and yet he did not belong to them ; he knew their ways and habits and was half a native—he had been in their employ, and had served them well, but he brought to their recollection the terrible time of the war, when every means had been adopted for the defence of the fatherland, even to the enforced enrolment of foreigners. They ought to have been grateful, but they were not, and he kept a good deal aloof. It was perhaps to our advantage, for he interested himself in the preparations for our journey, and purchased everything requisite ; among other things a capital cart, which he said would make a good sleeping place for Rayne, and he had also hired a steam launch to carry us to Concepcion.

Charley was not strong enough to waltz, but he had learned to perfection the slow movements of the *palomita*, and passed his evenings in dancing, flirting, and twisting his long moustache. The ladies were interested in him on account of his good looks, and of his being an invalid, and he was equally interested in, and admired, them very much. They are not perhaps so highly educated as their Argentine and Oriental sisters, but they are good-tempered, obliging, and pretty.

When the conversation turned on fixing a day for our departure, Charley seemed very anxious to defer it, for his present life quite satisfied him. For my part I had not forgotten one object that I had in view, namely the discovery of Alice Granton if she was still alive. I think I was absolutely a nuisance

to my friends, with my questions. I never met with a young lady of European appearance, without inquiring who and what she was ; and it is by no means uncommon to find girls of undoubted Paraguayan birth extremely fair, and with all the appearance of belonging to a more northern climate. I went out to several places where I was informed that there were girls who answered to my description, and one day I started by the train to Paraguarí, a distance of forty-four miles, and thence rode up to Itapé, where the Lincolnshire farmers formed their unsuccessful colony, and where it was stated that one or two settlers still remained.

The railway has been worked some twenty years, and during that period very little money has been expended on repairs or improvements. It is not, therefore, surprising that the permanent way is rough, the bridges rotten, and the rolling stock tumbling to pieces ; but it passes through a rich and beautiful country. About half way the scenery is absolutely enchanting. The train runs for some distance by the side of the magnificent lake of Ypacaray, lying at the foot of a range of hills covered to the very top with tropical vegetation, and then through the valley of Pirayú to the Cerro Mbatovi, where according to tradition Saint Thomas the Apostle once dwelt.*

* This tradition is modern, and only dates from the time of the Spaniards. The Holy person who was venerated by the Indians, and preached the Law of God was Pay Luma, and he seems also to have carried his mission to the Peruvians, but no information is obtainable as to his nationality. Father Charlevoix, the Jesuit historian, refuses to identify him with the Apostle.

It is difficult to imagine a lovelier spot than Itapé, where the English colonists proposed to establish their new homes, but which they abandoned after a very short stay. It is seventy-seven miles from Asuncion, and thirty-three from Paraguari, the terminus of the railway.

About a mile before reaching the village, we crossed the Tebicuarí, one of the great internal rivers of Paraguay, by a canoe, our horses swimming behind it. In ordinary times it is about one hundred yards broad at this point, but during the floods it sometimes swells to three times that width. The water is beautifully clear, and myriads of fish can be seen swimming about, but bathing is said to be dangerous, on account of the *palometa*, a fish which is addicted to biting off a toe, a finger, or other prominent part of the human form.

From the river's side there is an ascent through a forest of palms, cedars, and gigantic bamboos, to the open square, or *pláza* of the Capilla de Itapé, one of the old Jesuit Missions. The *pláza* is a clearing in the thick wood, of about two hundred yards square, and in its centre stands the little church. On two sides are lines of houses built of wood, but neat in appearance, and with verandas in front and back, and on the third stands a large *azotea*, or flat-roofed house, built of brick and stucco; the fourth, the side from which we approached, is bounded by the forest. Almost all Paraguayan villages are planned in a similar

way. The one large house is Government property, but built at the expense of the villagers, who give their labour ; and of the rich men in the neighbourhood, who, during the old *régime*, were obliged to find the requisite capital.

No better situation could have been selected for the colony. The land is chiefly State property, and therefore could have been, and in several cases, when demanded, was, assigned to the emigrants. Pasture lands are good, water abundant, the timber superb ; and there is no doubt, that the railway would have been extended from Paraguarí to Itapé, had the new undertaking shown the slightest vitality, and offered any inducements in the way of trade. But the managers were at loggerheads, the majority of the people idle and drunken, and so the project was discountenanced by the Paraguayan, and denounced by the English, Government. It will take a long time before the country recovers from the injury inflicted on its reputation, by the visit of the Lincolnshire farmers.

One colonist still remained—a Swede—who had left his own country for London, where, however, he had not been successful, and when it was proposed to him to join the expedition, he at once accepted the offer. Married to a native woman, a family was growing up around him, and he seemed perfectly contented with his lot. The Government had faithfully carried out the conditions they offered to emigrants, and he was

now in full ownership of some fifty acres of land, a pair of cart-bullocks and a cow, all of which he had received gratis. He had built himself a comfortable house, and had already added considerably to his live stock.

When questioned as to the reason why his fellow-colonists had withdrawn in disgust, he told me that they had never given the land a fair trial. Only three or four had attempted to cultivate their holdings, while the remainder had been discontented from the commencement. The change of life had not suited them ; they wanted beer and butter, which at first they bought with the money they had with them, and when that was exhausted they exchanged their rations of good beef and flour, for a bad imitation of English ale, and for adulterated Irish butter. Few of them did any work, and many of them took to drink. *Chuchu* appeared among the families huddled together in the big sheds, that had been constructed for them, for they would not take the trouble to build themselves separate tenements ; and through want of cleanliness their feet became filled with *piques*, little insects that penetrate the skin, and make their nests in the flesh, and thus they were soon disabled from walking.

My Swede had known Major Granton well : his was a commanding figure that could not be mistaken, and, in his opinion, if the Major had stayed in the colony the result would have been very different, but

there were disagreements between him, and the manager, and in consequence he determined to settle at a considerable distance. He had heard of his death, and of his wife's, and as to the child he remembered it well. The little girl had been a great pet on board ship during the passage, and they were all sorry, when she was taken away from Itapé. He had, however, seen her once again after Mrs. Granton's death; the Paraguayan woman, who had been engaged as nurse for the little one, brought it back with her, and stayed one night at the colony. The next day she started on foot, stating that she was going to take the child to Asuncion, and he had heard no more about them. I inquired whether she stated to whom she was taking the child, and he replied that she had only said, she had been told to take it to the capital. She had no boxes with her—only a bundle. He did not know what had become of the property of the parents, and he was certain that the child with her nurse, passed through the village some months before the colony was dissolved. /

With this information I had to be satisfied. It seemed certain that the child had been taken back to Asuncion; that it had been completely severed from the colonists; and that in all probability it had been adopted by its nurse, who was said to have doted upon it.

Wishing continued prosperity to my friendly Swede, I started on the return journey, and the next day found myself back in the capital.

CHAPTER XIV.

TO CONCEPCION.

TWO days later we started on our up-river journey. In the interval I had made further inquiries about Alice Granton, but without success. The President, however, very kindly interested himself in the matter, and gave especial charge to the Chief of Police to lend me his assistance. I put the whole case before this gentleman, and he assured me that there would be no difficulty in finding the nurse, if she was still in the country.

Our steam-launch was a fine little boat, capable, it was stated, of making eight or nine knots an hour against the current; but we were well satisfied with much less, for, in addition to the passengers on her deck, with their appurtenances, she had to tow a *chóta*, or flat-bottomed barge, loaded with our cart, horses, and mules.

The river grows narrower after leaving Asuncion; it is seldom a mile in breadth, and frequently not more than half a mile, but it is very interesting, and as we hugged as closely as possible the left bank, the

Paraguayan side, in order to avoid the strength of the current, we could make a careful examination as we passed along. This bank is generally higher than the opposite one, the Chaco, and the forest, which borders both shores of the river, is denser on this side. Sometimes there is a break in the thick belt of wood, and we pass a clearing where men are at work, cutting timber for the Argentine markets. Birds are in plenty, and alligators in shoals, but in the heat of the day they all seem songless, and listless.

Once we jumped up in a hurry to descry a steamer of which we heard the whistle as we rounded a point, but the pilot smiled, and told us that it was a bird. I did not catch its name, but the imitation was perfect. Now and then we passed a dismantled fort, but the towns or villages stand back from the edge of the main river, and are generally situated on the banks of the numerous tributaries that flow into it.

At sunset we made fast to an enormous tree, for we only had one pilot, the skipper himself, and he could not be expected to con us, both by night and day. Carancho, who had been appointed cook, and who was really a very clever one, set to work to prepare supper, and I got out the lines to see whether I could add some fresh-caught fish to the meal; while Charley and Willis said that they would go and have a look at the Chaco, and started in the canoe, which hung on to our stern, accompanied by Pepe and the Mame-luke, as we always called the Indian.

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So far as regarded numbers my fishing was successful. I was making a pile on the deck, for I scarcely threw the line before the bait was seized; but the skipper did not seem to think much of the quality, for he remarked, as he examined the lot, "There's nothing but *bagre*!" But while he was speaking there was another bite and a severe tussle, and then I landed, or decked, a *pacú*, a fine round flat-fish, the turbot of Paraguay, weighing at least ten to twelve pounds. He smiled pleasantly, and, releasing the fish from the hook, said that he would take it to Carancho, and tell him how to cook it.

This was the only good stroke of fortune, and when the canoe party returned on board, Rayne looked most contemptuously at my collection of bagres. *Silurus bagre*—the white ones are fair eating, but my catch was of the commoner sort, or *bagre toro*.

"Well, old man, I cannot say that you have done much for the commissariat department, for these things are hardly worth the trouble of cooking. Happily we have found a first-rate fishmonger, as you shall see. Pepe, bring up the fish."

Pepe came up the side and threw upon the deck four magnificent *dorados*, a fish similar to carp, but larger and more delicate. I knew that they had no lines, and I could not imagine where they had got the fish, but to my inquiry, the only answer that Charley would give me was "From a tiger." When, however, my *pacú* had been eaten and pronounced

delicious, the story was told to me of their wonderful catch.

They had paddled right across the river, and then turned up stream, intending to drop down again with the current. After proceeding some little distance they rounded a point, and then perceived in front of them some long object projecting into the water, which appeared to be the trunk of a tree, on which was extended a living body. The skipper had warned the party to be wary of Indians, and at first sight they supposed the reclining object to be one of them, engaged in fishing, for as they gazed they saw something, bright and shining lifted, out of the water, and thrown backwards on to the dry ground, but the Mameluke stopped paddling, made a sign for silence, and whispered "Yaguareté." It was indeed a large jaguar, and occupied in fishing, for while they watched, they saw the operation again performed. The brute was lying on its side, with one paw in the water, and as the fish came down the stream, he cleverly spooned them up, and threw them over his body, on to dry land. Before Willis or Rayne could get a shot, the slight ripple made by the canoe, had attracted the animal's attention, and away he darted into the thick dark wood. They paddled close up, and, in spite of Willis's warnings, Pepe stepped into the water and waded to the land. He seized upon three large fish still alive, and, what with their weight and struggles, he had some difficulty in getting back, and only reached the boat

in time; for the jaguar, enraged at seeing its property unlawfully removed, made a bound that brought it on to the trunk, within a few yards of the boat. It was met by the discharge of two rifles, which made it turn again into cover, and they pulled Pepe into the canoe, and came on board with their prize. "A plucky and useful member of society," was Charley's remark about the jaguar, "and I hope we did not hit him, for it would have been cruel to wound him, after appropriating his supper for our breakfast."

The little steamer and its convoy reached Concepcion, the end of our journey by water, on the fourth day after leaving Asuncion, a distance of 200 miles. The river is broader at this point, but is divided into two branches by an island, which is in front of the little town. Before the war, Concepcion was a place of some importance, owing to its being the centre of the yerba-maté trade; and the number of decayed houses, the size of the church, which is much larger than most villages possess, the dismantled barracks, the tumble-down hospital, and the kilns for drying yerba, all show that at one time it had a considerable trade and a fair population; but the demand for yerba has very much decreased, and with it the trade and inhabitants of Concepcion have greatly diminished. There is, of course, no hotel or inn, but the padre's house supplied the place of a *dák bangla*, or traveller's rest-house, and of it we took possession.

The *Gefe Politico*, the *Juez de Paz*, the *Capitan*

del Puerto, for the village has all these Government officials, immediately called to see us, and to them we explained our wants, and asked for their assistance. We did not, of course, state the real object of our journey, but we told them that we were going to look for sport in the Chiriguele yerba district, and the Cordillera of Amanbay; and we requested them to find three *yuntas*, or pairs of cart bullocks, three or four mules or horses, and peóns to accompany them. They hesitated for some time, and conversed among themselves in Guarani, and then the Gefe, an intelligent man, who spoke Spanish extremely well acted as spokesman, and informed us, that they regretted very much to hear of our determination, and thought that there would be great difficulty in fulfilling our wishes. "Formerly," he said, "we used to work those yerbaes, and all the country was cultivated, but since the war, the exploitation has completely ceased, and the district is deserted. You will find," he went on, "game in abundance on the Aquidaban, or the Ipané. Why should you go to the Cordillera to encounter the fierce yaguareté, the terrible *mborebi* (tapir), and the savage Indians? Several men have gone and never returned, and it will be very difficult to get anyone to accompany you." Willis acted as interpreter, and translated for Rayne's benefit. Charley replied that he did not fear the *mborebi*; that he wished to study the habits of the Indians; and that he hoped to find tigers as numerous as rabbits.

They took his playful banter in good part ; he won them over, as he won most people with whom he came in to contact, and the Gefé promised that he would make inquiries, and let us know the result, later in the day.

Pepe was very active in beating up recruits ; he was to be seen in all parts of the plaza, first button-holding one and then another, if you can so speak of people who had no buttons, and he reported that he had every hope of finding some men ; but it was Rayne who really brought matters to a point.

Now that the water journey had ended, all the cases had been opened, and he had pressed Estanislado, Carancho, and the Mameluke into his service, to rub and clean, and polish, the guns and rifles.

One of his last purchases in London, as I have already said, had been two repeating rifles of an Austrian pattern, called the "Mannlicher," a new invention that he had seen tried, but with which he had not, himself, had any practice.*

After the siesta he determined to test his acquisitions, and walked across the plaza with one rifle on his shoulder, followed by Estanislado with the second,

* They were magazine guns of two patterns. The heavier one when loaded weighed about 12 lb., and carried 20 cartridges in the butt and one in the firing chamber. The other was simpler, and had only space for 12 cartridges in the magazine and one in the chamber. There are only six parts in the apparatus, and it can be pulled to pieces and put together again in a few seconds. The cartridges were Prussian, with 77 grains of powder, and a bullet weighing 380 grains. By a very simple movement both guns can be converted from magazine to single action weapons. Ours got a good deal of knocking about, but were never out of order. Rayne, as a military man, did not like them for the service. He said that they would spoil good shooting, as the balance of the arm is changed with each discharge. But he thought that they would be invaluable in the Navy, to beat off boarders, or to meet a sudden rush.

and by Carancho and the Mameluke, carrying the cartridges. A good range was found on the open side of the square, and a butt in the blackened wall of the ruined barracks.

The little procession attracted a good many idlers of both sexes, and in a short time there was, for a place like Concepcion, a very respectable crowd. It was necessary to make a mark, and with a piece of chalk, Charley sketched on the wall, a very fair representation of a tiger sitting on its haunches, in the act of begging. The spectators evidently understood at once what it was intended for, for there was a murmur of "yaguareté!" From the building, followed by the whole crowd, he retreated 200 paces and then turning, again faced the wall. Raising the rifle to his shoulder, he took deliberate aim and fired. The shot did its own marking, for it knocked off a piece of the black plaster, leaving a white spot just below the tiger's shoulder. The second was an equally good hit, and struck the figure a little higher than the former one, and then he emptied the magazine as rapidly as possible. The natives gazed in astonishment at witnessing the continuous firing without re-loading, and we ourselves were surprised at the accuracy of the rifle, and at Rayne's splendid practice. Out of twenty-one cartridges, seventeen bullets had struck the tiger.

The natives were full of admiration, and several of the men whom Pepe had been trying to induce to

join us, but who, up to this time, had hesitated, now, of their own accord, made overtures. Charley had turned the scale. They were taken by his personal appearance, and by his good temper and general *bonhomie*, and they felt that neither tigers nor Indians would be so terrible as they had imagined, if they had him in front with his magazine rifles.

So in two days more we had procured bullocks and mules and drivers; and there was nothing to delay our immediate departure. On our last evening we gave a banquet to the Gefe Politico, the Juez de Paz, our host the padre, and all the notabilities of Concepcion. It passed off very successfully; but an incident occurred during dinner which seemed to disturb very greatly the mind of Willis, and, as I afterwards knew, not without reason. This was the arrival of a new guest. While we were sitting at dinner, or supper, there was a great clatter outside the house; and suddenly the little town, usually a "sleepy hollow," with everyone in bed at eight o'clock, was roused into a wonderful state of excitement. Our visitors rushed out of the house, and we followed more leisurely, and found in the plaza, surrounded by the whole population, a troop of Cavalry, or mounted police. We counted thirty-five men, rather ragged in appearance, but well armed with carbines and sabres. Their horses were small, and weary with a long march, but looked in good condition. The commandant was a man of soldierly appearance, and

rode an animal that evidently had been imported from down the river, as it was both larger and better bred than the troopers'.

We came upon the crowd just as the officer dismounted, and was met by the Gefé. We did not hear the conversation, but, evidently, it had something to do with us; for after a few words had passed the Gefé turned round, and pointed to where we were standing. Then the officer made some reply, and they came up to us, and the commandant was introduced as Major Ramirez.

We invited him to join our party, and during the evening he stated that he had been ordered from San Pedro to Bella Vista, an outpost in the north of Paraguay, and near the frontier, established in the time of President Francia, as a defence against the Indians, but abandoned since the war. He added that the object of his journey was to report on the condition of this outpost, which the Government proposed to re-establish.

I have mentioned before, that between Willis and myself, there always seemed to be a sort of barrier. We were not unfriendly, and treated one another with civility; but we did not grow at all more intimate through living constantly together, in fact there was a want of, what is called in Spanish, *sympatia* between us. To what this was due on his part I do not know, but for myself I had felt for a long time, that he ought to have given us more of his confidence, that

he should at least have told Rayne, with whom he was on most intimate terms, *the secret*, if he did not care to impart it to me. But here we were; we had travelled together thousands of miles; he had had ample opportunities for showing the sketch-plan of the ground, but all that we knew was the fact, that we were about to undertake a long march to the yerbales of Chiriguele, which might be, and probably were, miles from the exact spot where the treasure was supposed to be hidden. Anything might happen to him, the plan might be lost, and our journey by sea and land would be profitless, except, as I hoped, with regard to Charley's health.

After the banquet had ended, and our guests had departed, I was sitting in the veranda, smoking my last pipe, when these thoughts came more forcibly to my mind, because Rayne's cough had been very troublesome the last two nights. I had just decided to have some sort of explanation with Willis, when that gentleman came up to me.

"Penistone," he said, "I want to have a word or two with you, if you can spare the time."

"I am perfectly at liberty," I replied somewhat coldly, "shall we sit here or go into the *comedor*?"

"Neither," he answered, "walls have ears, and the thin walls of Paraguay have especially acute hearing; let us go out there into the middle of the plaza, in the light of the moon."

We stepped out from the veranda, and walked in

perfect silence to the very middle of the plaza. When beyond the possibility of being heard by the denizens of the surrounding houses, he commenced :

"I have told you that one of the chief features of Paraguayan character is suspicion, and what has happened to-night confirms what I said. Do you know what has brought that squadron here? No. Well, they have come on our account. Some one has got an inkling of our project. Probably, it is merely that, following the old system of Lopez and his predecessors, the Government wishes to be satisfied, as to the business of every individual resident in the country, whether native or foreign, and has sent Ramirez to follow us, and to report on everything we do. I know Ramirez, though he has not recognized me; he is a Lopezista, bred in the old Paraguayan school, a brave man, and a good soldier, because he is a thorough disciplinarian. If he has got orders to shoot us, he will carry them out to the letter, but he is no diplomatist; in his first move he made a mistake; when he spoke to the Gefé he was making inquiries, and the Gefé let the cat out of the bag when he pointed to us. Pepe has found out that they only left San Pedro, a distance of sixty miles, at three o'clock this morning; that is a pretty good forced march, and why did they make it? Simply because Ramirez thought we might have started before his arrival.

"The talk about Bella Vista, and re-establishment

of a post there is all rubbish, but as far as Observacion, we and they follow the same road, and up to that point he will have us safe. When we turn off, there will be some other sort of spies, probably women ; they are exceedingly useful for the purpose, and are constantly employed in Paraguay. Beware of petticoats as we go along ! But to come to business. I told you before we started that there were many risks to be run, and here is one of them. This does not imply any personal danger to you, except in the event of the discovery of the treasure, and a scuffle for it, and even then they would not do you, or Captain Rayne, any harm if they could avoid it. But with me, it is different ; they will know me before long for Don Felix, half a Paraguayan and an old officer of Lopez, and they will not be very tender if I give any cause of offence. It is wise, therefore, to be prepared for eventualities, and I have in my pocket copies of the tracing, that I found on the sketching-block of Don Luis, and also a plan of the ground as I left it, after distroying the landmarks. These copies are for you, and Captain Rayne. I do not hand them to you now, for you may be certain that Ramirez or some of his people are watching us, but I will give them to you under there in the darkness," pointing to the house. "With these in your hand," he added, "you cannot fail to find the exact spot where the treasure is buried."

For some seconds I made no answer. Here had I

been thinking of forcing an explanation from Willis, and he, of his own accord, had offered it to me. Then I thanked him, and frankly stated what had been passing through my mind, when he joined me under the veranda.

He smiled more pleasantly than I had ever seen him do before, when conversing with me, and said :

“ I have caught something of the Paraguayan character, and of their suspicion. I wanted to know my men before speaking, and I have studied you both carefully during the voyage. As to you, I am perfectly satisfied, and for Rayne I have contracted a great friendship ; but he is an admirer of the fair sex, and the sex of him. Put a Paraguayan girl by his side, and if she can only make him understand the language, Spanish or Guarani, she will worm the secret of the treasure out of him, in half an hour.”

“ There is a good deal of truth in what you say about Rayne,” I replied, “ and I cannot deny his weakness. For my part, I am perfectly satisfied with your offer to give me copies of the sketches, and I do not see that anything will be gained by bringing him into the business, until he asks for information. At present he is perfectly contented, and perhaps before he wants further details, all danger may have passed away.”

“ If you do not think that he will be annoyed,” said Willis, “ I agree that it will be wiser not to say anything to him. And now let us go, for we ought to

start before daybreak, at least if there is no storm, but I do not altogether like the look of the sky."

I gazed upwards, and could see nothing to fear. It was a glorious spectacle. The moon had gone down, but the firmament was filled with stars, and as I looked many of them moved about ; not falling as it is commonly said, but apparently darting on visits from one to another, or speeding as messengers from one heavenly body to a neighbour, probably at a distance of many thousands of miles.

Under the veranda Willis gave me a packet of papers, and then with an adios we parted, better friends, than we had ever been before.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MARCH.

BEFORE day-break Carancho was at the side of my *catre*, a couch very like the Indian charpai, with a hot maté, not of yerba, but of coffee, with a dash of lemon-juice, as a preservative from *chuchu* or fever, which I always perferred in the early morning; and shortly afterwards everyone was astir. In the plaza there was plenty of noise and excitement. The drivers were shouting, and probably swearing in Guarani, at unruly bullocks, which appeared to have a great aversion to being hauled by the horns up to the yoke, and fastened there; and Carancho and Estanislado, already mounted, were dashing about, twirling their lazos in the air, in full chase after an animal that had managed to get loose. His liberty was of short duration, the long loop whizzed through the air, and fell fairly over his horns, the rider reduced his horse's speed, but the bullock still dashed forward, until he came to the end of his tether, and then with a bound upwards, that tried the strength of the *trenza*, he turned a somerset, and came with a crash to the ground.

Carancho rode up to assist Eslanislado, and threw

another lasso over the animal's head, and between the two he was soon brought up to the cart, sometimes lying back, and at others dashing madly forward.

We took leave of the good padre, who had shown us every hospitality, and made him a present which, in his eyes, was magnificent, and then we crossed the plaza to bid farewell to the Gefe and the other officials. The whole populace had assembled to say good-bye, and passing through the crowd, we found that further honours awaited us, for in front of the house was paraded on foot the troop of Cavalry, that had arrived on the previous evening.

They were polished up, and looked much more respectable, and as we approached the door, at the Major's word of command, they presented arms in a steady and business-like manner. Our parting did not take long. In mere politeness we were bound to accept a stirrup-cup, in the shape of a glass of *cáña*, and reply to the expostulations of the Gefe, who again urged us not to approach the Cordillera. The Major informed me, that he should rest his cattle for a day or two, but should probably catch us up before we reached Observacion; and then, after distributing *bakhshish* among the poorer town-folk, we mounted our horses, and, followed by many good wishes, rode after the carts.

There are no suburbs round Concepcion. Behind the row of houses fronting the plaza there is one street containing a few ranchos, or *toldos*, scattered

here and there, but when these are passed, you at once enter the woodlands. We had arrived at the town a party of seven, consisting of our three selves, Pepe, Estanislado, Carancho, and the Mameluke, with four horses, two mules, and a cart, and since then we added considerably to the caravan.

A country cart had been hired, with bullocks to draw both our vehicles, in all eighteen, including a reserve; and in the middle of this reserve, which was driven in rear, were four young oxen, to be turned in course of time into beef, for, although we hoped to find plenty of game, we did not trust entirely to the guns, for our maintenance. To drive the carts and cattle, there were in all six peóns, two of whom were mounted on small country horses, and so altogether we made a very respectable appearance. The road along which we were travelling was called a cart road, but it really consisted of two ruts, or grooves, worn so deeply below the original level, that the axles sometimes grazed the top of the ground, between the wheels. The trees and shrubs grew so close that the carts, as they passed, brushed the branches, and sometimes broke them off; and we, who rode in front, had constantly to clear a passage with our whips and sticks, or bend down over the saddle-bows to save our heads, from being struck by the overhanging boughs. The forest seemed alive, both above our heads, and below our feet. The thickness of the foliage prevented us from seeing the birds,

except occasionally, but we heard them everywhere. On the ground, almost every step taken by our horses, seemed to frighten some living animal. *Yñambu*, or little ground partridges, held up their heads for one second, and then scuttled away through the grass; *anguya*, field rats and mice, rushed about on all sides, while *cobaie*, grey guinea pigs, in their hurry to escape, fell into the ruts and ran on before us, unable to get out. Once a *chinchilla*, a sort of wild rabbit, crossed our path, and shortly afterwards we caught a glimpse of one of his enemies, an *aguara guazú* (*Canis Rufus*), a fine, large, red-haired animal, half wolf, half fox.

The Mameluke caused us great amusement. He travelled on foot, and was certainly in the very lightest marching order. His whole attire consisted of a straw hat, and a coloured shirt, which was fastened round the waist with a handkerchief. That was all his clothing, but during his stay at Concepcion he had procured the arms and weapons, to which he was accustomed. At his back, stuck into his belt, were a long knife and a sheaf of arrows, while a bow hung from his shoulder, and in his hand he carried a long stick with a small loop at its end. Sometimes he was in the wood, on one side or other of us, sometimes ahead of, and at others behind, the caravan, but every time that he appeared he produced a prize of one sort or another. Now it was a baby *cuati*, a sort of racoon, that he handed to Charley, whose fingers it immediately bit; and then he appeared with a *mulita*, one

of the prettiest of the armadilloes. This one is very delicate eating, and extremely clean in its habits. It has its own sanitary arrangements, and every sunny morning brings the nest out of its hole, to air it. The *mataco* is another of the species, equally clean, but smaller. When danger approaches, it rolls itself into a complete ball, which can be thrown from hand to hand. The *peludo*, the *pichy*, and several other *tatus*, as they are called, have bristles growing on the thick shield that protects them, but they are dirty in their habits, and their flesh is coarse and rank. The poorer classes eat them, however, and the Mameluke caught and killed every one, that crossed his path. His method of catching the ground partridges was very clever. The little thing on hearing a footstep stops short, and for a second raises its head to listen. In that second he lowered his stick, and dropped the noose at its end over the head, and with a twist of his wrist, raised the bird from the ground, nearly strangled. He never seemed to miss, and in a short time he had collected a considerable number, in one of the carts.

The road is the main north road, and before the war there had been posting houses at distances of every five or six miles. On our way we passed several of these, mostly unroofed and abandoned, but two or three were in a fair state of repair, and inhabited. There is little or no cultivation for some miles immediately round Concepcion, the soil consisting chiefly

of hard sandstone, and the few people that we came across seemed very poor.

But after six miles of forest, and bad roads, we emerged upon a more open country, picked out, here and there, with patches of trees of much larger growth than those through which we had passed, and in many places so marshy, that the bullocks had hard work to pull the carts through heavy ground, in which our horses sometimes sank to their knees.

The sudden change from the dark, but cool forest into broad daylight, under a hot sun, was pleasant at first, but we soon began to wish again for cover. The day was very hot, and the little wind that was blowing came from the north-east, a quarter as trying in Paraguay, as the east wind is at home. We all felt the effects of it, man and beast alike; it seemed to dry the surface of the skin, and hinder perspiration, and both Charley and I complained of headaches, and his cough, from which he had been free for a day or two, returned with increased strength.

Willis reminded me, that on the previous evening he had said that the weather looked threatening, and the bullock-drivers were unanimously of opinion that we were about to have a storm, and advised us to push on, if possible, to Zanjagué-Yurú, where they said there were some houses in good repair. We therefore curtailed our mid-day rest, only waiting the necessary time to feed ourselves and the animals, and then again marched onwards. In the distance we saw

several herds of deer, and on the appearance of some ostriches (*Rhea Americana*) there was an universal cry of "ñandu" from the Paraguayans, and Estanislado and Carancho both unfastened the *boleadores*, they carried round the waist. These consist of two heavy pieces of lead about the size of a hen's egg, joined together by a strip of twisted hide some six feet in length. In throwing them, one ball is held in the hand, high above the head, while the other is whirled round and round, and at the right moment the missile is let fly, to wind round the neck, or the legs of the animal to be captured.

We were riding quietly along, through high grass, when a ñandu rose, from almost under our horses' feet. The animals shied so as nearly to upset us, but Carancho and Estanislado were after him in a second. With his enormous wings spread out, the great bird seemed actually to sail away, but the horses sprang forward with ardour for the chase, and brought their riders within distance for throwing the bolas. Carancho let fly and missed him, but in order to get before the wind, the bird swerved to the left, and came within measurable distance of Estanislado. With a whirr the *bolas* went flying through the air, and in a second a struggling mass of feathers, heaped upon the ground, had taken the place of the erect and noble creature. The bolas had wound round his neck and legs, and brought him bodily down. We watched the process of skinning him, which con-

sisted of cutting him down the back, from head to tail, and stripping off the skin and wings in one piece, and then we rode forward, and caught up the carts.

Rayne made two good shots during the afternoon ; with one he brought down a *mutú* (Crax Sclateri, the curassow), a species of wild pheasant, a magnificent bird, speckled black and white, with yellow beak, and capital eating ; and with the other a *guazú mimi*, or small roebuck. We had watched Charley for some time trying to get within shot of a herd of these animals, and were delighted at his success, for the cover was very poor. Willis said that all the animals were half mazed with the north wind, otherwise they would never have let him approach them, in such open country, near enough to kill.

These incidents had delayed the mounted party, and we galloped forward with all the greater haste because the weather grew more and more threatening. As the afternoon wore on the sky became overcast, and when we reached the post, a considerable time before sunset, it was nearly pitch dark. We all worked with a will to unsaddle horses, unfasten the bullocks, and get them all into the corral, or cattle-pen, which stood in the middle of what we imagined to be a little village, for fear of their being driven before the coming storm, and lost. We had barely finished when it was upon us. Carancho had taken possession of the house which appeared to have the most water-proof roof, and into it we hurried with all

the goods and chattels that would suffer from exposure. Seated in the darkness on our saddles, we listened to the howling of the wind, that appeared every moment to increase in force. There was no door, but we found a dry hide which was evidently intended to supply the place of one, and this we fastened up as securely as possible. But it was hardly in position when the hurricane seemed to have gathered its forces for a crushing blow, and dashed at the building with all its strength. The hide was torn from its lashings, and hurled to the opposite side of the room, which in a moment was half filled with dust and small stones, that inflicted, on more than one of us, very nasty blows. But worse than any wound was the hot blast that filled the room ; that half stifled us ; that caused us to gasp for breath ; and that seemed absolutely to stop the action of the heart. While it lasted the agony I suffered was acute—a perfect struggle for life ! and I felt that I must escape from that room, or make it my grave. I jumped up, shouting to my companions to come under the lee of the house ; but Willis roared in reply, “ You will be blown away, Penistone ; lie on your face and wait until the rain comes.” I followed his advice ; and when another blast reached us I suffered less. Then came the sound of heavy drops of rain, like lead, falling on the thatched roof ; peal after peal of thunder followed, and the flashing of the lightning was so continuous that no other illuminating power was necessary.

The drops, at first few and far between, soon increased to one great down-pour of rain, the noise of which exceeded that of the most realistic storm ever put upon a London stage, with the aid of dried peas, and we quickly found that our roof afforded but little protection. We had passed successfully through the stifling process; now let us try drowning. But happily we were saved. The storm passed over as quickly as it had come, and when we stepped out of the house, as the rain was ceasing, we were in time to witness a lovely sunset. The poor animals were at once relieved from the corral; they looked frightfully miserable and wobegone, but they soon recovered. The bullocks took to their food at once, but the horses and mules seemed to be inspired by one, and the same desire. They moved off in a body to a spot just beyond the houses, where there was a bed of white silvery sand, and there they had a good roll before making their evening repast. All Nature seemed grateful that the storm had come and passed away. The few residents came out to salute us. Their great dogs, of a mongrel breed, but extremely useful as protectors against the tigers, tried to make friends with us; a pet cuati, with his furry coat, long nose, and bushy tail, played antics with a little monkey, and we could hear the birds chattering and chirping in the trees, which looked clean and green after the heavy rain. But the storm had left its marks. Charley Rayne complained that his throat was full of dust. Nothing would tempt

him to eat ; he had been dwelling on the promise of Carancho, to furnish a dish of ostrich steaks for supper, but when they appeared, done to a turn and smoking hot, he could not touch them, and he totally declined a puchero of partridges. All night long he was torn by his frightful cough, and in the morning I found him worn out and exhausted. He still retained his old pluck and spirit, and was almost angry when I spoke of turning back.

"What ! after coming all this way, are we to turn back now," he said, "because I have got my throat full of dust ? What nonsense, Arthur."

"Yes," I replied, "but remember the bleeding last night ; that's a bad symptom, and there is no doctor to look after you."

"Some little vein in the throat that's burst with the violence of the cough," he answered. "Don't be frightened, old man, I shall beat the bullet yet."

I hoped for the best and yielded, but we delayed our start until the afternoon, in order that he might have a rest.

During that day we crossed the great plain of Agagigo. The district is superb for breeding and fattening cattle. The grass is luxurious and succulent, water plentiful, and the shade of the trees, scattered here and there, most grateful. Willis told us that all this country had been well populated before the war, and that the herds of cattle had been numerous. He stated that Paraguayan dried hides had in former

times fetched higher prices in the European markets than any others from the River Plate, on account of their greater weight, due, as he said, to the extra thickness of skin with which Nature had provided the cattle as a protection against insects. These are innumerable, and caused us great annoyance, especially when crossing marshy ground. The smallest of all the many descriptions of mosquitoes, called by the natives *viudas*, or widows, were the worst, and sometimes made life miserable to us, while the *bichos colorados* and the *garrapatas* settled on the horses and bullocks, and nearly drove them mad.

That evening we encamped at the post of La Laguna, twelve leagues from Concepcion, or about thirty miles English, for the Paraguayan league is 360 yards less than our own. Charley's cough had been incessant throughout the day, but he would continue to ride instead of taking to the cart. This evening he had no more appetite than on the previous one, and the night that he passed was worse than the one before. In the morning I had a long conversation with Willis. I expressed my own wish to give up the expedition and carry Rayne back to the civilized world whilst he was still living, if I could possibly do so, but he did not concur in my views. He had made inquiries, among the bullock drivers, and they had told him that at the Estancia Observacion, which we should reach the next day, there was a good house, standing on high ground and sheltered by orange groves, which

mosquitoes will not penetrate, and he recommended that we should go there, and see whether we could nurse Rayne back into health.

Charley would not hear a word about going back, but he fully concurred in Willis's plan, and, though weak and exhausted, was soon on horseback and ready for the march.

We were now approaching the Aquidaban, an important river, and a navigable one for a considerable stretch, during the greater part of the year. It rises in the Cordillera and, flowing from east to west across the country, falls into the Paraguay half way between Concepcion and the Divino Salvador. The face of the country had changed again. We were now among marshes, lakes, and palm woods, and the insects were excessively trying. I was very anxious about Charley, and my worst fears were realized when I saw him reel in his saddle, and nearly fall from his horse. He was caught just at the moment, but it took some time to bring him out of the fainting fit, into which he had fallen. He wanted to mount again when he got better, but that I sternly prohibited; and Willis quickly and cleverly arranged a hammock, slung between the horses of Estanislado and Carancho, and in this we placed him. In this way he travelled with much less jolting than he would have received in the cart, until we reached the banks of the Aquidaban.

We had to cross at the Páso de Barreto. There is

a steep decline to the water's edge, then a ford of 50 yards broad, in which the water reaches above the girths, and an ascent equally steep on the other side. To carry Charley over in the hammock was simply impossible, he would have been drowned in the transit, or, at the very least, thoroughly wetted through. But gauchos, like Estanislado and Carancho, are never in want of resources. They went to the hired country cart, and in a business way cut the lashings which attached the toldo, or curved roof, to the sides. When they had lowered it to the ground and turned it over it had all the appearance of a boat or canoe with square ends, in fact a coracle, the ribs being of strong cane, and the sheathing of stretched dry hide. It was light, buoyant, and perfectly sea-worthy. They took it down to the water, and laid some rugs for Rayne to lie upon, and then returning, carried him down and gently placed him in it. Attaching their lassoes to the canoe, they mounted and rode across the river towing it behind them. My instructions to the two men were to go on at once to Estancia Observacion, with Charley in his hammock; but, on second thought, I asked Willis to accompany them, for it might be necessary that some one should be able to speak Guarani, a language which no one of the three understood. To this he agreed, and I remained behind to pass the carts safely across. This was a long and difficult operation. The decline was so steep that we had to place bullocks on

the top of the bank, attached by long lassoes to each cart, to hold it back and prevent it from going down with a run; and it took some time before we got both the vehicles down to the water. To cross and ascend the opposite bank it took six yúntas, or twelve bullocks, to pull the smaller and lighter cart; but that arrived safely on the high ground.

The attempt with the country cart was not so successful; it stuck half way up the embankment, and it took a long time to dig it out. Consequently I was delayed for several hours, and the sun was setting when I rode up to the Estancia Observacion. It was not a pueblo, nor even a hamlet, but certainly it was a larger post than any we had passed. There are about a dozen houses surrounding a building of considerable size, evidently the Estancia, and in them resided formerly the people employed in the care of cattle, of which, in earlier days, there had been nearly 2,000 head. The herds had disappeared during the war, and had never been replaced. But, probably, there were some fifty people, men, women, and children, still living on the Estancia, and supporting themselves by cultivating oranges and sugar canes. At the largest house I noticed, as I approached, two well-made bullock carts, one of them being very similar to our own, and covered with wood instead of hides, and a number of drivers and peóns lying under the verandas. Willis met me on my arrival, and naturally my first question was about Charley.

"He is no worse," he replied, "and he is in good hands."

"In whose hands?" I inquired.

"The women are here, as I told you they were sure to be. The peóns say they are travelling up to the yerbales of Tacurúpitá, where their mistress has property. That is the excuse; it is a place further north than we are going, and so they will either go with us or follow us close the whole way."

"And what sort of women are they?" I asked.

"Well," he replied, "I ought to have said *ladies*; they are evidently of the highest class of Paraguayans. They speak Spanish perfectly, and as for their dress, it might be English."

"And are there many?"

"They are mother and daughter, with three women servants, but they seem to have a number of peóns as well; I have seen at least six or seven. I have no doubt, Penistone," he went on, "that their real object is to watch our movements, but still, the meeting is not altogether unfortunate. Captain Rayne requires nursing, and the elder lady seems to know perfectly what she is about. She has already despatched one of her women to find some particular herb. There are plenty of medicines in these forests, and Paraguayan women are great adepts in their use. Captain Rayne cannot tell much about our projects, and we must be constantly on the watch."

"Well," I said, "I suppose I may go in and see Charley; are they with him?"

"No; Carancho is there, and the ladies are now on that side of the building; this we have to ourselves."

I entered the room pointed out to me, and found Charley lying on a *cátre*, which I saw at once had been tidied by female hands. Under his head there were soft pillows, while over him was placed a white *rebózo*, or shawl, and white muslin mosquito curtains were hung round the bed, and kept him from the annoyance of the hateful insects. Through weakness and coughing he had completely lost his voice, at least for the time, and he could only whisper huskily, though he smiled as he said it, "I am afraid, old man, the bullet has got the best of it at last." I did not stay long, for he was inclined to sleep, but I did him one good service, for I stopped Carancho's operation, namely, that of cutting into slips, a raw deer hide which smelt very badly.

CHAPTER XVI.

DOLORES.

THE sun was setting as I slipped out of the room into the veranda. In a hollow on my right I saw Willis, with a group of men, surrounding some object, which turned out to be one of the animals that we had brought for food, and that they were now turning into beef. In front was a large grassy plain that had all the appearance of an English park, and on it were grazing our cattle, together with the bullocks belonging to the party of whom Willis had spoken to me, making altogether a goodly herd.

Looking to my left, at the far end of the veranda I spied a group of females, two of whom were seated, while three others squatted at their feet. My feelings towards them were naturally not very favourable. I had accepted as a fact Willis's statement that women were often employed as spies in Paraguay, and that these women had followed us in that capacity. And yet he had said that two of them were ladies by birth and breeding, and it was difficult to conceive that persons in that class would undertake such a duty. If they

could do anything to restore Charley's health, I should be undoubtedly grateful, but that remained to be seen ; and even in that matter I felt that I must be on my guard, for if they were capable of one disgraceful action, they might also have other designs. I had no desire therefore to seek their acquaintance, and determined not to make any advances. But whilst I was meditating the two ladies rose from their chairs and walked in my direction, followed by two of their servants. From my position in the shade I was able to have a good look at them, as they slowly approached. There was a great difference between them, both in age and appearance. The elder one, whose arm encompassed the waist of her companion, seemed to be about fifty years of age, but in the tropics women grow old very quickly, at least in looks, and she might have been some years younger, especially as her black hair did not seem to be even tinged with grey. She had a fine tall figure, standing very nearly 5ft. 10in., and good broad shoulders. A healthy strong-made woman, with a look of stern purpose in her countenance, although when I first saw her face, she was smiling pleasantly on her daughter. Her features were undoubtedly Paraguayan. She had the prominent cheek-bones, the square chin, the dark complexion, the raven-black straight hair, the heavy eyebrows of her race, but her teeth were superb, and her black eyes large and sparkling. As to dress, black and white are the only colours worn by ladies of mature

age in Paraguay : white, fringed with native hand-made lace, by the lower classes ; black, with very little ornament, by the upper. The lady before me was wearing a black, well-fitting dress of cashmere, neatly finished with collar and cuffs ; in her hair she wore a handsome peineta, or comb of tortoiseshell, set in gold ; and a handkerchief of red silk was wound round her neck as a defence from the night air, and perhaps also as the finishing stroke to her attire.

I have endeavoured to convey the impression made upon me by the elder lady, but I must confess that I had considerable difficulty in concentrating my gaze upon her, and refraining from looking at the younger one on whom she was leaning.

Just as women of mature years age quickly, so in the tropics, do young girls develop rapidly to womanhood. The one before me I should have taken to be nineteen or twenty, but I afterwards heard that she had only counted seventeen summers.

The contrast between the mother and daughter was very remarkable. The complexion of the former was copper coloured, while the daughter was simply a brunette, and by no means a dark one. Her face was oval, her chin rounded, her cheeks smooth, and the cheek-bones not in the slightest degree prominent. Her eyes were blue and soft, and her hair a deep brown, tinged with gold, not black and smooth like a Paraguayan's, but covering her head in waves, that no amount of brushing could subdue.

Even in her attire she struck me as being very different from her country-women. Her dress was of light material of a grey colour fitting closely to her figure ; and around her neck was a cavalier collar of the beautiful spider-web, or flandutí lace, the ends of which were brought across her bosom in what I, am told, is called a "fichu." Whether dress-improvers had penetrated to Asuncion I cannot say, but the skirt of her robe seemed to fall in symmetrical folds, and her whole figure struck me as being perfect. In height she was at least a head shorter than her mother, but still she appeared to be above the ordinary stature of women. Lovely! queenly! divine! were the adjectives that I mentally applied to her, and which had nearly issued from my lips, when they caught sight of me and stopped short.

I advanced and raised my hat, and in my best Spanish I addressed the elder lady.

„I have to thank you, señora, for the kindness you have shown to my friend. I find him much more comfortable than I expected, and I sincerely hope that our arrival has not caused you any inconvenience."

"Ah! you are Don Arturo of whom Don Felix spoke. No, indeed, we were not occupying that side of the house, and are very glad indeed to give any assistance to the Captain. He appears very ill ; is it consumption ?"

I told her the cause of his illness, and while I spoke

I watched her companion. She had something in her bosom that was evidently struggling to get free, and seeing that I was noticing her actions she said in a soft clear voice, "It is a viudita, señor ;" and out popped one of the smallest parrots that I ever saw. The little thing settled on her shoulder, pecked at her face and lips, and chatted in Guarani, "Cuñataí, che amo ! che amo !" (Dearest one, I love you ! I love you !)

The incident made us all smile, and the elder lady said, "Dolores is very fond of animals and birds, and they all take to her at once." That fact did not surprise me, but it was difficult to adapt the name of Dolores (suffering or sorrow) to the healthy, happy-looking girl who was standing before me.

Then we talked about Charley, and the lady called to one of the servants, who brought her a jug full of some liquid, which she told me was a decoction of *cadimbé*, gillyflower as I afterwards heard was the English name, to sooth his cough. Dolores remained outside while we entered his room. He was dozing, but his constant cough prevented his sleeping. He took the medicine, and thanked his visitor for her kindness, in the best Spanish that he could muster, but in a very weak tone of voice. We sat in silence and watched for a considerable time, and certainly the draught seemed to have soothed his cough. Then as darkness set in Doña Ramona, for by that name I had heard Charley address her, said that she would send Francisca to stay with him all night, and took her

leave. Francisca came very shortly. She set to work, made up his pillows, and arranged everything for the night, as only a woman can do, and then, squatting down on the floor by the side of his bed, took a large black cigar from her bosom, lighted it, and puffed away in silence.

I went out and was joined by Willis, and we mutually agreed that all idea of moving for some days, must be given up, for, even if Rayne should be better the next morning, it would take some time before he could recover sufficient strength to continue his journey. Unhappily, on the next morning there was no improvement ; we had heard his cough almost incessantly during the night, and when I went to him at dawn of day he was quite exhausted. It made me very anxious, and the thought that he might die in that far-off land, away from his friends and without proper medical attendance, distressed me very greatly. Willis, who as I have said, was very fond of Charley, gave me all his sympathy, and Doña Ramona, who noticed our depression, kindly said :

“Don Arturo, we Paraguayans are not learned in medicine, but we know the use of many simple herbs, and we had plenty of experience in nursing during the war, when we had to tend our husbands and our sons. I will take charge of your friend, and with the aid of Providence and of Francisca, who is very cunning in herbs, I think we shall get him better.”

I did not know how to express my gratitude to

this lady, whom I had commenced by regarding with suspicion ; but now what mattered the treasure ? As long as she could pull Charley through ; what did I care whether she was a spy or not ?

The day passed very slowly. I left Charley to the care of Doña Ramona, only visiting him occasionally, but I could not absent myself from the house. I wandered listlessly about, at one time talking to Willis, at another watching Estanislado cutting *lonjas*, or thin strips, from a deer's hide, which he told me were to be fastened round the horses' necks to prevent their being bitten by snakes. I asked him why a bit of deer hide was a preventive against snake bites, but he had no reason to give me, he only knew that it was so, and I turned away with a smile at his superstition.

On the extensive plains, and in the dark forests of Paraguay, no hour of the day had such a depressing effect upon me as that of sunset. In towns and cities it is very different ; there the shops and lamps are lighted. The inhabitants, especially in tropical lands, seem to wake up and stir about just at the close of day, and the world seems brighter than even in the daylight ; but here the shadows grow longer and longer as the sun glides downwards, the birds chirrup and chatter for a little time, while engaged in making their nests, and then the luminary disappears, and everywhere there is darkness and silence. Sunset in these lands is still called the *oracion* (the hour

of prayer), and it is customary in all places where there are troops, to parade them at the decline of day, and to present arms at the moment that the sun drops below the horizon. The peasant coming home from work doffs his hat at the same moment, and his wife crosses herself, as she stands at the rancho door, watching the disappearance of daylight. It is a custom that probably dates from the Moorish invasion of Spain, when the *nidd* from the top of the *masjid*, reminded the faithful of their religious duties.

This evening I was sitting alone under the veranda, listening to that incessant cough that every minute called to my mind the fact of my friend's danger, and of his constant suffering. I happened to look down the long passage, and a lovely object met my view. Dolores stepped from her doorway, and stood with her hands crossed gazing at the sunset, as if she too was saying the oracion. And I believe that she was murmuring a prayer, not a prayer to the sun, but probably a maiden's petition to the Virgin, following the custom that has been handed down from time immemorial, which may have died out in busy southern cities, but which still exists in the quiet solitude of the hills and plains. As the great planet was lost to view, though leaving behind him a semi-circle of red and gold and purple, she slowly turned away and seated herself.

I could not resist; I was attracted by her marvellous

beauty, and I wanted some one with whom to converse, if only to divert my thoughts. Regardless of the laws of etiquette, and, in fact, in ignorance of the social code of Paraguay, I rose from my seat and approached her. She received me smilingly, and asked me to be seated. Evidently I had not acted improperly, and so at once I recovered from the nervousness that I had felt, as I was walking towards her. We talked, or rather I did, of her mother's patient, and naturally I said, how deeply obliged I was to that lady, for her kindness to my friend. She replied that Francisca had told her that he was a little better. She spoke in good pure Castilian, not with the high-pitched voice of the Argentine or Oriental lady, nor with the nasal twang of the Paraguayan, but softly, musically, and pleasantly. I told her how long the day had seemed to me, and asked how she had passed the time. She had been reading Italian. The wife of the Brazilian Minister at Asuncion had kindly lent her a book, and she had brought it with her. But how had she learnt Italian? She had been taught by the governess in the minister's family, with his own daughters. And did she know anything of French? Yes, a little. And English?

She hesitated for some seconds, and then replied :

"Only two or three words."

Then I politely inquired what was her name, for I had an idea in my mind.

"Dolores," she said, "I was baptized on the day

of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows), and so I am called Dolores."

"You look so bright and happy," I said, "that the name does not seem suitable to you, but what I intended to ask for, was your family name?"

"Oh, you mean mamma's name, that is Susini, she married a gentleman from Italy."

That the father had been of European birth accounted, to a great extent, for the contrast between Dolores, and her country-women. I was fain to confess that the idea which had flashed across my brain that this girl might be the lost Alice Granton, was absurd, and so I left the subject, and tried a conversation on other topics. But she would not talk; she answered my questions civilly, but shortly, and to the point; and I found it impossible to raise a subject of conversation. Driven to a man's last resource, I asked permission to smoke.

"Of course," she said, laughingly, "everyone smokes here, I will get you a cigar if you like."

I declined, and proceeded to twist a cigarette, which I offered to her.

"*Gracias!*" she replied, "I said that everyone smoked, but I am the exception. I have never done so."

I finished my cigarette, and then rose and made my *adios*. She bowed coldly, but expressed a wish that my friend would be better the next morning. So I took my leave, and I frankly confess that my

pride was hurt, and that I was grievously disappointed. Her beauty had attracted me, and I could see at once that she was a woman of education. Like most men, *tête-à-tête* with a pretty girl, I had endeavoured to make myself pleasant, and had tried every subject to draw her out, but I had utterly failed, and felt completely checkmated ; she had treated me with perfect politeness, and had replied frankly and courteously to my questions, but we had advanced no further, and she was just as distant as when we had met as total strangers, on the previous evening. I taxed myself as to whether I had given any cause of offence, but I could find no reason for her treatment, except that perhaps my questioning had been too direct and pertinent. But from that day she seemed to avoid me ; she never again appeared alone at the door of her apartments, and if I met her in her mother's, or other people's company, she invariably made some excuse for running away, just as I joined the party.

The two following days and nights were very miserable. Charley grew worse and worse ; want of sleep and inability to take any food were reducing him to a skeleton, and Doña Ramona confessed that his cough could not be assuaged by any of the remedies, which she and Francisca so carefully prepared. They watched him night and day, and supplied his every want ; and, though I frequently was in and out, I found that there was nothing that I could do to give him relief. So it came about that I found

myself chiefly dependent on Willis for companionship. He urged me to go out riding or shooting, but I had no inclination for either amusement, and the only pleasure that I found was in the evening when we smoked together, and he told me incidents of his old Paraguayan life.

I remember his relating what he called the history of the English Loans, a business which occurred after he had returned home, but about which he was consulted on account of his knowledge of the country. His story, as told to me, exemplified the gullibility of the British public.

It appears that in 1869 or 1870 there was, what is called a great *boom* in Loans generally. The States of Europe had borrowed all the money that they wanted, but there was still plenty left in the hands of capitalists, and the question was what to do with it? The City had cliques who were quite ready to invest surplus funds with good security, as they stated, and at high rates of interest. Brazil, and the Argentine Confederation, Uruguay, Chili, and Peru, had only to ask and their wants were at once supplied. Mexico and the United States of Colombia had already raised their loans, and then it became necessary to seek for new fields. Central America was in default on the Stock Exchange, but that made no difference, and several of the minor States that formerly composed the Union, such as Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras, were soon known as borrowers; and even

the negroes, of San Domingo and of Liberia, were able to get credit, though, as a matter of fact, very little of the money drawn from British pockets entered into those (if they have them) of the former.

It seemed that the lending must end, because there were no more borrowers; but happily for a band of City adventurers, though most unfortunately for all other parties concerned in the transaction, it was discovered, while the "boom" was still on, that a little Mesopotamia in South America, the name of which was only known to the general public through passing references, made in the *Times*, at long intervals, to a war that had been raging there, could be greatly benefited if a helping hand, in the shape of a loan, should be extended to her. This was Paraguay.

If gold be an absolute necessity for the maintenance of an administration and the preservation of nominal independence, then, indeed, Paraguay required it; for in the whole country there was no ready cash, and, with the exception of the bare land, there was no security to offer to those charitable people, who were prepared to lend their money. As time has proved, after the lapse of a decade and a half, Paraguay would have thrived equally well without the pittance that reached the country, and that was robbed by its rulers, and would have been saved from the incubus of a heavy foreign debt. But the advantage of Paraguay was not the consideration that entered into the plans of the London

syndicate, composed of a stock-broker, a banker's clerk, a newspaper writer, and an adventurous Spaniard, or a Spanish adventurer. These parties had got into communication with an Argentine gentleman, at that time resident in England, who was desirous of mortgaging his wife's property in Buenos Ayres. Such a mortgage did not, however, suit the purpose of the syndicate; the spokesman informed the intending mortgager that he could not see his way to assist him in his private affairs, but that if he knew of any State in South America requiring financial assistance, he thought it might be forthcoming. The Argentine did know of one, in which he had influential relatives. It was true that the country was depopulated, ruined, loaded with a heavy war indemnity, and utterly impecunious; but once upon a time it had been rich, well-populated, and even powerful among its immediate neighbours. "Let us forget what she is now," was the kindly reply; "let us remember only what the country has been, and endeavour to bring her back to her former position."

The rest was easy: the adventurous Spaniard, or Spanish adventurer, was despatched to Asuncion. When he unfolded his proposal to furnish, through his friends in London, the trifling sum of two millions sterling, the penniless individuals who formed the Government, held their breath with amazement, and were inclined to regard the commissioner as a

mountebank ; but he was not wanting in arguments, and after many Cabinet Councils had been held, he was at length informed that the Government would gladly accept a loan of half a million, and believed that they would be able honestly to pay the interest.

Half a million ! a flea-bite of 500,000 pounds ! it was absurd. He was offering to them a sum of money that would set the country again upon its legs, and they declined it ! The Ministers were actually ashamed of their intended honesty, and split the difference. It was arranged that there should be a Paraguayan loan of one million, with interest at the rate of eight per cent. per annum, and the commissioner returned with flying colours to London, carrying full powers to his Argentine friend.

The loan was a great success. What could be more enticing than the offer of £100 at 8 per cent. per annum, at the price of £80, with payment of interest and capital guaranteed by a general mortgage of the whole country and property, of the Republic of Paraguay.

Rich capitalists applied and at once sold their allotments, while "stags" were numerous and quickly took their profit, but there were many people who clutched at the golden opportunity for doubling and more than doubling their incomes ; ladies, who never rested until their sound 3 per Cent. consols were exchanged for rotten Paraguayan Bonds ; half-pay officers who commuted their pensions ; poor clergymen who sacrificed their

children's education in order to invest ; and tradesmen who gave bills of sale on their shops, and stock-in-trade, in the hope of suddenly increasing their capital.

On the hands of these classes, the real investors, the stock was left, and the very name of Paraguay must for years have stunk in their nostrils. For four years interest was paid, out of the capital subscribed to the first loan, and to another one that followed, and then everything collapsed, and the market value of the stock drooped and drooped until a £100 bond could be purchased for £2 or £3. There was weeping and gnashing of teeth, and on one occasion the suffering bondholders rose in arms. The whole question of Foreign Loans was brought before the House of Commons ; there was a great deal of virtuous indignation, and one celebrated lawyer threatened "to bring the noses of all parties, connected with the issue, to the grindstone." A Select Committee of the House was formed, many people were examined, and a good deal of amusement was derived, but the whole thing ended in smoke, or rather, in a large blue-book.

As to Paraguay it absolutely derived no benefit. It is true that £640,000 of the first issue were duly accounted for, and that £460,000 were shipped from this country, but the larger portion of that sum, for some cause or other, remained in Buenos Ayres, and it is stated that only £150,000 ever reached Asuncion. Even that amount would have done a great deal of good for the country if it had been properly employed,

but unfortunately that was not the case. The facility with which the Government had obtained funds, had entirely demoralized it. One Minister, almost without disguise, shipped a great portion of the sovereigns back to Buenos Ayres, where, with the proceeds of his robbery, he built himself a residence; while a second entered into a contract with the State, to furnish bullocks for ploughing, and seed for sowing, of both of which the country was destitute. The bullocks that he supplied were calves and yearlings, and the seed was rotten, but the difference between the contract price and his actual outlay, made him a rich man.

"There you have," said Willis, "the history of the Loans, and the country like this you see around, as fine as any in South America for pasturing cattle, is still almost untenanted, while Paraguay owes a million and a half, with all its accumulated interest."*

* Since this was written a settlement has been made regarding the loans, and the Government has remitted to London a sum of money as the first payment on account of interest. It has besides agreed to cede to the bondholders 500 square leagues of public land in exchange for Land Warrants issued in discharge of the unpaid coupons. In my opinion an investment in landed property in Paraguay will in a short time prove as remunerative as similar investments have done in the Argentine Confederation. The square league of land which is now worth from one to three hundred pounds will in a few years be worth as many thousands. But the bondholders must not expect grants of land on the river itself, at least on the left or eastern side; for all such lands are private property, and have been so since the advent of the Spaniards. State lands in Paraguay proper are those which have in more recent times been recovered from the Indians and the Jesuits; and these all lie nearer to the Cordillera of Amanbay. Our journey was made chiefly through State property of this description, which according to the Land Law of 1885 may be sold at not less than 800 dollars, or say £160, the square league (of 4,500 acres English), which is at the rate of 8½d. per acre. The Government offers to each holder of £100 nominal value of coupons a Land Warrant entitling him to 145 acres of the very land I have described, and consequently it appears that the present value of a £100 Land Warrant is £5.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONVALESCENCE.

TWO more terribly anxious days were passed. Rayne was growing so weak that he hardly appeared to have strength to cough, and yet the hack, hack, hack, never let him rest. On the second night neither Willis nor I turned in; we had upon us the dread of losing a friend who was dear to both of us. Just about break of day, I was dozing in a chair when Charley's cough, this time a most violent attack, suddenly awakened me. I opened his door, but Doña Ramona signed to me not to enter. I waited patiently for some time while the attack continued, and then suddenly there was a dead silence. I dreaded the worst, or at least that he had broken a blood-vessel, and being unable to bear the suspense any longer I went into his room. He was lying motionless, but breathing, and on inquiring of Doña Ramona, she told me that there had been bleeding, but very slight.

Some two hours afterwards I was sent for in haste, and going to his bedside, I found him with a smile upon his face. He could not speak, nor could he raise

his hand, his weakness was so great; but with head and eyes he signed to me to look upon the table at his side. One little object was standing in the middle, and taking it in my hand I found it was a bullet, a small one intended for a revolver, of a pattern that I had not seen before, but which probably was French. It was *the* bullet, the bullet that had obliged him to give up his career; that had ruined his health, and had caused him years of suffering.

Whether this result came about through the effects of a sea voyage and the air of Paraguay, or whether the sand-storm at Zanjagué deserves the credit of relieving him of it, has always been a question between Charley and myself; he supporting always the former theory, while I have blamed myself for bringing him so far away from home and comfort; but certain it is that he began to mend from the time that he got rid of the hateful obstacle. It took nearly as many weeks, to recover the strength that he had lost as it had taken days to lose it, but I have a suspicion that he came to like the convalescent stage, and that he had no urgent desire to take his name off the sick list.

Two or three days after his last attack, we brought him into the veranda, just after the siésta, and there, naturally, Doña Ramona came to inquire after the health of her patient. But Doña Ramona did not come alone; she was accompanied by Dolores, who, for the first time, was introduced to the invalid.

Her visit was short on this occasion, but the next day Charley was brought out earlier, and both in the morning and the afternoon, the ladies sat with him for some time. So it went on, and every day the intimacy grew greater, and I noticed that sometimes Doña Ramona would leave them together, while she attended to other matters in her own apartments. Soon there was a demand for books, as Charley had informed me that Dolores had promised to teach him Spanish, and he, in return, was to give her lessons in English. So all our baggage was ransacked, and about a dozen novels were collected; and, fortunately, a Spanish grammar was found among them. For some hours each day the two were to be seen seated side by side, the book between them, and their heads rather close together. I have no doubt that Charley was rapidly picking up Spanish, but I do not think that the grammar was any great assistance. It seemed to me that he gave more attention to the words that fell from the pretty lips of his gentle preceptress, than to the pages of Ollendorff. But I took very little part in their studies; for, as I have already said, Dolores, on my approach, generally made some excuse for leaving. And this was so marked that Charley one day asked me what I had said or done to offend her. "Nothing that I know of," I replied. "I have only spoken with her once or twice, but for the future I will keep out of the way, and not allow my presence to annoy her."

There was no actual estrangement between Rayne and myself, but after that little episode his friendship was not quite so warm ; and even with Willis he grew fractious and irritable.

The troop of Cavalry happened to pass by Observation *en route* from Concepcion to Bella Vista, and remained encamped near us the greater part of a day and night. Major Ramirez dined and slept in our part of the house, but he paid a long visit to the ladies. It was only natural that he should go, and see his countrywomen. But Willis remarked that it was curious that the Cavalry should have come up in such haste to Concepcion while we were there, and have delayed so long before continuing their journey. "I fancy," he said, "that some information must have reached him from here, that our march had been postponed." The three of us were together, but Willis seemed rather to address himself to me than to Charley. The latter, however, replied almost rudely, 'What do you mean? I know you talk about women spies, but if you are insinuating that Doña Ramona and her daughter are of that class, then I say it is false. They are ladies—as much ladies as your own relatives, and perfectly incapable of such baseness." Willis gave some sort of explanation, and there the subject dropped ; but there were frequently skirmishes on other matters. Rayne took up the defence of Lopez : that his character had been greatly misjudged ; that, instead of being a ruthless

tyrant, he really was a brave and patriotic man, and even went to the extreme of questioning the truth of Don Valentin's assassination.

All this made life very unpleasant, and both Willis and I kept away from the house as much as possible. I am not much of a sportsman, but he was a capital shot; and we used to be out all day long, and sometimes stayed away for the night. Pepe and Estanislado were always in attendance, and carried our hammocks and provisions. At one time we thought of pushing on to Chiriguele, where the treasure was supposed to exist. The distance was only about 120 miles, and although the road is very bad we might, without the impedimenta of carts and bullocks, have made the journey there and back in four days, and have satisfied ourselves whether there was any use in the whole expedition marching up. But there were two reasons against our doing so: one that we did not like to leave Charley alone for so long a time, notwithstanding his treatment of us; and secondly, as the three had started jointly on the expedition, it was unfair for any two, to take action without the third party being present.

We found, however, plenty to interest and amuse us in the forests; and on the plains of the Department of Concepcion there is everything to satisfy the eye of the painter, and the heart of the sportsman.

It was nearly the end of autumn, close on to winter,

when we wandered through the Paraguayan woods, yet we seldom found a tree denuded of its leaves, although it is evident that at the fall of the year they change their colour; but the varied tints—green, brown, yellow, red, and purple—only added beauty to the scene, which was still more heightened by the plumage of the many birds, that flew from tree to tree. The most beautiful is a pie, in a coat of garter-blue velvet, a vest of golden plush, a head dress of crimson silk; but he is a mischievous, murderous creature, given to strike anything, smaller than himself, a sharp blow on the head with his strong yellow beak, and lay him dead at his feet. Toucans are very numerous, and add to the effect. There are said to be several different classes, but I could never distinguish between them. It seemed that the height of their ambition was to be able to boast of possessing the largest bill, or horn mouth, and some of them appeared to be made of bill entirely. The great beak was discernible everywhere, while no body was visible. The *guacamayo*—a great macaw, with pink and white plumage and a long tail—sweeps gracefully from one tree top to another, while parrots innumerable flutter about everywhere. One bird we heard constantly at sunset, but I never saw it. It is said to be very small and of a greyish colour, and it has a cry exactly like the bell of a church or chapel. There, in the deep forest, you could well believe that a bell was summoning the faithful to evening service, when

a *pajaro campana* was in your neighbourhood ; and the natives firmly believe that it learned its extraordinary note in the time of the Jesuits, when they introduced Christianity and churches. It is a pretty fancy, and I do not know but that the theory may be correct. It is quite possible that birds possessing great powers of imitation may have caught the sound of a bell, or of a steam-whistle, and that in this way one of them became a *bell-bird*, and another, when steamers commenced to run on the Paraguay, a *whistling-bird*. Their progeny would reproduce the notes in their respective districts ; one class on the river, the other in the forest, and so it may be that the sound of a " passing bell " still lingers, though the bells themselves are rust and the Jesuits dust.

Of birds fit for the table, and extremely good eating, there are very many. The *fandu*, or American ostrich, heads the list as being the largest, and the steaks cut from his big wings, grilled on the embers, are delicious. The *yacú hú* and the *mutú*—both of them wild pheasants, and classed in the Zoological Gardens as curassows—are capital, especially when roasted in their feathers in balls of clay, as Carancho knew how to do them ; and smaller game is abundant. I have already mentioned the ground partridges so frequently noosed by the Mameluke, but there are several other kinds. One, a large, red-legged bird, rises well and affords good sport, but he is often run down by the natives, for he will only take to flight

three times, and after the last, he runs through the grass, and may easily be caught. There are several other descriptions, all known by the general name of *ñambú*, and one that we frequently met with, on high ground, had feathered legs, and much of the appearance of grouse. Pepe and the Mameluke brought in splendid bags. The *ñandu* is excessively curious, and of a very inquiring nature. If he notices any uncommon object he immediately proceeds to find out what it is; and the *yacús* are attracted by anything sparkling. These latter when domesticated are excessively dangerous to children, for they peck at their eyes. Of these weaknesses, Pepe and the Indian took advantage. They would throw down on the plain a red poncho, and lie in wait within arrow-shot, for, although we offered him a gun, the Mameluke preferred his bow. A flock of the huge birds, consisting of the broad-headed sultan, and five or six members of his harem, would soon be attracted, and approach with all sorts of gambols and coquetry; at one time ambling forward on tip-toe, then turning, and dashing away with their wings outstretched. At length they would summon courage, and close round the unknown object, and that moment was seized upon by the watchers; an arrow whizzed through the air and brought down one, while Pepe's rifle did execution on a second. The trap for the *yacús*, was a piece of looking-glass, or of polished steel. It was placed so that the rays of the sun fell upon it, and the birds,

who always seek the highest range of vision, would soon be attracted, fly down, and cluster round it, and then a bag was quickly made.

Of big game there is plenty. In the forest we constantly came across the *guazú pitá*, a red deer, a fine, noble, antlered stag, of which we shot several, but we found that as venison they were worthless, and that the hide was the only part of any account. In connection with the deer, however, I got a lesson which went far to confirm the assertion of Estanislado, that snakes would not attack a horse with a strip of deer-hide round his neck.

Willis and I had penetrated through the thick forest, and suddenly came upon an open plain. In front of us, and not a hundred yards off, was a *guazú-birá*, an animal more allied by colour, horns, and activity to the chamois than to the deer, although the literal translation of its name is "fawn of the forest." Willis touched my arm to prevent my proceeding further, and whispered "Snakes." We stopped short, and watched the performance. The *guazú* took no notice of us, but attended solely to the business in hand, which appeared to be that of ambling round a circle about twenty yards in diameter. Three times he made the circuit, but each time he decreased the diameter, and suddenly, when exactly opposite where we were standing, for one second he stopped short, and then dashed into the very centre. Then came a *rat-à-plan*, a sharp, quick

patter-patter on the ground with its fore-paws, like blows of the sticks on a drum, and, with a haughty shake of his antlers, away he dashed to cover. Willis raised his rifle, but I begged him not to fire ; and together we entered the circle and looked at the spot, but recently occupied by the guazú. For some minutes we searched without result, and then Willis said, " Here it is ! a *ñandurú* ! " and looking down, I discovered a little snake still struggling, but nearly cut into three pieces.

Willis told me that it was one of the most venomous reptiles, worse even than the viper of the cross, for it was so small and so like in colour to the grass that a horse might be grazing without suspicion of danger, when suddenly it would snap at his nose. Its bite is deadly. Tobacco quickly applied is a remedy for most snake bites, but it has no curative effect for that of the *ñandurú*. Deer are the incarnate enemies of snakes, and I came to the conclusion that the act of Estanislado, in fastening a strip of hide round the necks of the horses under his charge, was not altogether one of superstition.

The natives say that there is a stag to be found in these parts as tall as a horse ; from their description it would be an elk, but we never met with any signs of it. There are, however, two wild animals of considerable size, and we commissioned the Mameluke to seek for traces of them. These are the *pécari* and the *tapir*. Of *pécaris* there are two distinct classes.

The *tayteti* is a little pig that wanders about in herds, sometimes of upwards of a hundred in number. We often came across such a herd, and shot two or three porkers, and found the flesh very good eating. The *tayasu* is a sanglier, or javali, a real wild boar, very savage, and generally living a solitary life, and it was on his track that we put the Mameluke.

The spoils of the chase on our return to the Estancia were generally exhibited in front of the veranda, and as Rayne's strength improved, so did his longing increase, to take part in the sport. He had to commence by degrees; at first he had attempted nothing more than a walk up and down the veranda, and he was still so weak that even in that undertaking he had to accept an offer of assistance from Dolores. Then the "constitutional" was extended to the open green in front, which declined gently to the forest, and on one occasion he spoke of trying a ride. That was when we had mentioned the fact that the Mameluke was looking for "pig," and he got quite excited, and vowed that he would set to work and manufacture spears, for it was wicked to use a rifle on such a beast.

I watched this little affair as it progressed, and so I know did Willis, but we never exchanged our views. Both of us cared for Rayne, but neither of us had any right to interfere in what he was doing. I used to think of his mother. What could she care

for a strange daughter-in-law from Paraguay, however beautiful she might be ; and how would she be able to recognize the girl's value when they had no common language in which to communicate ? And without doubt the girl had a great value, in addition to her splendid beauty. She was modest, but self-possessed, with quiet, lady-like manners ; and they must have had some means of entertaining one another in spite of the want of a mutual tongue, for I have frequently heard the sound of his laughter, and of her more musical rejoinder. Charley probably spoke Hindustani, after some years residence in India, but he was not proficient in French, knew very little of Spanish, and nothing of Italian, and yet the two appeared to be perfectly contented and amused. But, as a matter of fact, I saw very little of the interior life of the Estancia during this period. With Dolores I exchanged greetings generally once a day, and I confess that, though her words were few, her smile was sweet ; with Charley I met at the evening meal, where Willis was also present, and the chief subject of conversation was the sport that we had found during the day. Doña Ramona seemed, on the other hand, rather to seek my society, at least, whenever we met, she at once commenced a conversation.

South American young ladies are undoubtedly permitted a good deal of liberty, but I do not think that they take any improper advantage of their privileges. Houses are thrown open in the cool of

the evening, and in each of them troops of young men meet troops of young women. They separate into couples, and in the dim twilight or semi-darkness they sit and talk together, heaven knows about what, but in the end it is announced, that the *Señorita Fulana* is engaged to *Don Sultano*, and it generally turns out that both families are satisfied, and that the right man is engaged to the right young lady. But here the case was different. *Dolores* was not the centre of a bevy of young girls, and surrounded by companions; she shone alone, under proper female protection it is true, but without any rival to her superb beauty, and a perfect queen over the rougher sex. *Charley* was, so to speak, at her feet; *I* and *Willis* could not fail to admire her, and as for *Carancho*, *Estanislado*, *Pepe*, and even the *Mameluke*, they seemed to think more of finding something to please "*Missia Dolores*"—a curious little bird, a little monkey, or a baby squirrel—than they did of the necessity of furnishing the larder for themselves, and their employers.

I brooded over these things: Why did *Dofia Ramona* allow her daughter such unrestrained liberty? Why did she permit her to pass hours in the society of a young and handsome man, who might also be considered an interesting convalescent? Did she mean to marry her daughter to this young foreigner; to let her cross the seas with him, and to part with her probably for ever?

In all our conversations she never asked me any questions as to his family, or his means ; and in fact scarcely mentioned him or her daughter ; but the love-making, for it was nothing else, went on before her very eyes, and she must have known that the end must be happiness or misery. Not that the latter alternative would ever arise from dishonourable conduct on Charley's part—I knew him too well to imagine that—but we still had a long and dangerous journey to make, on which Dolores could not well accompany us, and if they were once separated, would they ever meet again ?

So Doña Ramona's line of conduct was a veritable enigma to me, and the only solution that I could discover was the one at which Willis had previously hinted, namely that she was here to spy upon our actions, and that Dolores was being used as her instrument.

Was she a willing one ? was she a party to the plot ? Night after night, I thought on these questions, and generally gave my verdict against her ; but when I looked upon her in the morning—bright, graceful and winning, and with a straightforward, honest look in her eyes—I invariably reversed my judgment. But the truth would now soon be known. The Mameluke turned up one evening to report the discovery of a real javall or wild boar, and Charley was delighted at the thought of renewing his Indian exploits in pig-sticking ; but in the first place we had to manu-

facture spears, and secondly, we thought it very unwise that after a long illness his first essay on horseback should be to join in a dangerous sport, and in what might perhaps be a long day's work. He acknowledged that our views were right, and agreed to wait a day and try his strength, before putting it to a severe trial. So our horses were ordered for the next morning shortly after sunrise, so that he might have his ride before the great heat of the day. I was not a little surprised to find next morning in addition to our horses two others with side-saddles, but Charley explained that Dolores, accompanied by one of the women, was to join the party. That young lady shortly appeared, looking, I think, prettier than ever, in a well-fitting habit that would have passed muster in the *Row*.

The hat would, perhaps, have caused some sensation, but it suited the climate and its wearer—a white straw, or rather Panama grass, hat, with one side turned up and ornamented with ostrich feathers. She mounted her horse, with Charley's assistance, quickly and gracefully, and sat it well. The animal itself was better than anything we had, and was, I was told, a *mestizo*, or of Argentine and English blood, a present from her friends, the family of the Brazilian Minister, and together they certainly made a very pretty picture.

We started riding four abreast over what might be called the village green, followed by a body-

guard consisting of the woman in attendance on Dolores, Estanislado, and Pepe ; but soon we had to break our line in order to pass through a thick bit of wood, and when we emerged on a large park-like glade beyond, our formation had changed ; Charley and Dolores were ahead, while I and Willis were *tête-à-tête*. The morning was lovely, and as cool as a spring morning at home ; cold, indeed, it might have been called, and we were all glad to seek the side on which the rising sun began to throw its rays. The horses enjoyed it as much as we did ; they champed their bits, threw forward their heads, and showed other signs of impatience. The *alasan*, or bright chestnut, that Dolores rode had done but little work recently, and was the most excited of all, and so, as if by mutual consent, we loosened the rein, and away the horses sprang over the plain. There is no pleasanter motion than that of a horse bred on the great prairies, or *campos*, of Buenos Ayres. There are few or no obstacles to cause it to raise the forehands, the only danger is that of stepping into a bizcachera (the hole of the bizcacha, or Peruvian hare) or some other pitfall, made by a ground animal. And so the action is natural, there is no high stepping, the neck is slightly arched, and the head held a little low. In this way a *pingo*—a really good horse—will maintain a speed of about ten miles an hour at a steady, quiet canter, or hand gallop, for two hours at the stretch, or even for a longer period, causing so

little shaking or other annoyance to the rider that he may sleep if he likes, and often does. We were all well mounted, but the horse that Dolores rode had a longer stride than the others; however, Charley managed to keep alongside, and they quickly drew ahead.

"Let them go," said Willis; "they don't want us, and after that burst we may jog along more quietly, and not take too much out of the cattle, if we are to look for the javali to-morrow. But Captain Rayne is all there; his seat is as firm as ever, and he appears to have got over his illness wonderfully."

"Yes," I said; "and I think it is time we were on the move. What is there to detain us now? Why not start the day after to-morrow?"

"That is already arranged, I believe," he replied; "at least Pepe has told me that Doña Ramóna's people have got orders to start then, and I doubt whether Captain Rayne will let them go alone, and therefore it seems to follow that we shall march too."

"And when will our routes separate," I asked.

"Looking at that couple in front," he answered, "I was going to say, Never! but what I mean is, that Doña Ramóna's destination is reached by exactly the same road as ours, but that she professes to be going still further on."

"Ah!" I sighed, "I wish we had never come to the Estancia!"

"What difference does that make, Penistone? If

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we had not met them there, they would have found us somewhere else. They left Asuncion shortly after our arrival in that city, and, I have no doubt, have been waiting here for us."

"Yes, Willis, I know your belief; but I cannot imagine that that lovely girl is a spy."

"Nor do I think it," he said; "but the mother is very astute, and she is making the daughter carry out her plans without telling her what they are."

"But what are her plans?" I inquired.

"I take it," he said, as he pulled up his horse, and turned round to me, "that our project has leaked out by some means, or that the Government is suspicious of anyone approaching the spot, where the wealth of Lopez is supposed to be hidden. I have no doubt but that the Government is concerned in what is happening, otherwise why has that troop of Cavalry been sent up? As for the part that Doña Ramóna is playing, it is difficult to say for whom she is acting. It may be in her own interest—it may be that she belongs to the family of Lopez, and from words that she has dropped I think that is the case, or it may be that she is commissioned by the Government. But, clever as she is, her acts do not tally with her story. That story is that she has a large property at Tacurupitá, which has been allowed to run to ruin since the war, and that she is going up to *poblar* it, that is to say, to build a house and leave some one in charge; and her people add that one of the carts contains tools and

implements and other necessary things. But Pepe told me yesterday that they are only going to take one cart, and that is the one which is fitted as a dwelling place. The other is to remain here, and will be useful for carrying down the treasure if we happen to find it, and if they happen to take it from us."

"But cannot we get away from them? We are well mounted, and our cart is lighter; they could hardly catch us up."

"That is true; but you may be certain," he replied "that we are well watched, and that the Cavalry is not far off; and, besides, I think that Captain Rayne will claim to have his voice in the matter. Look! there they are coming back, and it strikes me that if he has to choose between two Paraguayan treasures, he will hold to that one by his side."

The girl must indeed have possessed great powers of attraction to draw from a man like Willis so strong an expression of admiration, but as she cantered up, and brought the alazán to a sudden halt in front of us, her beauty was so exquisite and her grace so perfect, that no other word than "treasure" seemed applicable to her. The sharp ride had brought a glow to her cheeks; the gentle breeze had disarranged her hair, never too much under control, and one long tress had escaped from beneath the hat, and fallen upon her shoulder; her eyes glistened with health and happiness, and as she bent her stately neck in a gracious salute, and gave me a sweet smile of recog-

dition, I called to mind the Laureate's charming picture of another beautiful, and accomplished horse-woman,—King Arthur's "stately" but unhappy Queen—

“As she fled fast thro' sun and shade,
The happy winds upon her play'd,
Blowing the ringlet from the braid :
She looked so lovely as she sway'd
 The rein with dainty finger-tips,
A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth for this,
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
 Upon her perfect lips.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BOAR HUNT.

THE morning's trial satisfied us, that not only had Rayne recovered a great deal of his strength, but that with it, his zest for sport had returned. The Mameluke was examined and cross-examined, and re-examined, as to the whereabouts of the javalí; the men were employed in cutting bamboos, and sharpening knives to make spears, which when completed, did not at all take my fancy.

In the course of the morning I asked Charley whether he thought himself well enough to commence the journey on the day after the next, and his reply was :

"Certainly, old man; 'I thought it was all arranged. Doña Ramóna is quite ready, and we can all start together."

It was very evident that our movements were to be dependent on those of Doña Ramóna, and for a moment I felt inclined to ask him to make his selection between *two treasures*, but I knew that any expostulations would end in a breach of our friendship, and

perhaps in our separation. That should not be the case even if I had to sacrifice my *own* projects to his, for I had bound myself in honour to Mrs. Rayne, to take him back to her, if he survived the journey.

So I gave a general answer, and turned away to complete the preparations for our departure. But I was greatly annoyed the next morning, when before break of day, on turning out to mount my horse, I found the alazán standing ready saddled.

Pig-sticking was an amusement that I had never followed, but I had been told that it is a description of sport not unaccompanied by danger; and Willis had had no more experience than myself. Charley had practised it often enough in India, but here he was the only one who knew anything about it; and if the boar was to be hunted, he must show us how to do it, and yet we were to be hampered with a young girl. He sauntered out, while I was standing among the horses, marvellously got up in breeches and tops, and after exchanging good-mornings, I said :

“ You don’t mean to say that Dolores is going with us to-day ? ”

“ Yes, why not ? ” he said. “ She would like to see the fun, and Doña Ramóna has no objection.”

“ But, my dear fellow,” I replied, “ surely there is a certain amount of danger, and who is to look after her ? ”

“ Danger, bah ! and besides I told the Mameluke to get out the big dogs. She will see the start,

and then the boys will look after her, until we return."

At this moment Dolores appeared, looking as fresh and neat as if she had had hours to make her toilet, instead of having risen before dawn, and I said no more, but I told Estanislado to hang my carbine to the saddle, and asked Willis also to take his, determined to commit the unsportsmanlike act of shooting a wild boar, rather than allow a serious accident to take place.

The Mameluke with his dogs did not put in an appearance, but Pepe said that he had gone on in front. Under his guidance we headed due west, over a country that neither Willis nor I, in our explorations, had cared to visit, for it seemed too open and marshy for any game except *guazu*, or deer, and that was useless for the pot; and we proceeded for some five or six miles until we came upon an *arroyó*, or stream, that flows into the Aquidabán. This we crossed, and following its banks for another mile, we reached a spot where the Mameluke was standing. He held in his hand by leashes of *caragüatá*, or Paraguayan jute, two enormous brindled hounds such as are used for hunting *pumas*, and tigers, great heavy brutes, standing from two feet six inches to three feet in height, of no particular breed, but possessing great courage. Pepe and the Mameluke interchanged a few words, and then we moved on. The sun was just above the horizon, and we could see around us but indistinctly,

for there was a low-lying haze, or fog ; everything appeared exaggerated in height and shape ; in front of us there was what appeared to be a thick wood, but on coming closer, it turned out to be a collection of tall rushes ; and a little further on, we came upon a clump of trees, which at a short distance had towered to the sky like a mountain peak. Here we halted, and there was a general tightening of girths, Charley attending to the saddle of Dolores, and giving her some advice as to the position she was to take up, and instructing the men as to what they were to do. Then we remounted, and Estanislado handed to each of us one of the spears or lances, that had been manufactured the day before. I confess I regarded the implement placed in my hand, with great distrust and contempt. It consisted of a light bamboo, to which was cleverly fastened an ordinary gaucho's *cuchillo*, or long knife ; but the spear was not well balanced, in fact not balanced at all ; I was doubtful whether the fastening would stand a blow, and more than all I had not the remotest idea how to use it. I looked at Willis and saw that he was eyeing his spear with considerable suspicion, and as he met my gaze he very significantly loosened his carbine, and I did the same to mine. But the Mameluke, with the dogs still in hand, made signs to us to move forward, and facing Dolores, we saluted her by dropping the point of our lances, and then wheeled and followed him. It was a bit of low-lying ground, covered with stubble and rushes, upon

which we entered ; probably in wet weather a deep muddy marsh, but at present safe, though soft and pliable. We had proceeded but a short distance when the dogs growled, and sprang forward with a force that tried both the strength of the leashes, and of their keeper. But he held on, and though forced into a run, would not let go. The horses too snorted and became very restless, but we moved forward keeping them as quiet as possible, until we broke through the rushes, or reeds, and came upon a small pond, on the edge of which was standing some animal.

I have but a very slight recollection of all the incidents of my first, and only day's pig-sticking, but as I caught sight of the javalí, and I came upon him very closely, there passed through my mind the vision of a "blue boar" that in former days used to adorn the frontage of an hotel in Holborn, or some other part of London, and which, for all I know, may still be there. Certainly the hide of the beast, of which I got a good glimpse, was blue mixed with silver, or else the bristles were of that colour. My horse shied at the sight, and almost threw me, but I had time to see the bristles stand up nearly erect and his mouth to open, displaying a large pair of tusks ; and I heard him give a short sharp noise, more like a bark than a grunt, as he half turned and caught sight of the dogs. Then there was a hurry and a scuffle ; Willis rushed past me at racing pace, and we were

away. I settled into the saddle, let go my horse's head, and was quickly alongside of him.

I know nothing of the terms used in regard to pig-sticking, or boar hunting, but had the chase been an ostrich I should have said we went after him in "calle," using a Spanish expression that means to say that we kept him in a straight lane, or *street*, between us, so that he should not burst away on either hand. He was running gamely some distance ahead, and kept our horses at top speed. In appearance he had very little resemblance to the domestic pig, except perhaps, in the tail, which was hardly worthy of mention. He struck me as being more like a hyena, with heavy head and shoulders that occupied three quarters of his whole body, lean narrow quarters, and long hind legs. But I had little time for examination. Something made me look towards Charley on the opposite side of the "street" and there, behind him, I saw Dolores dashing madly forward on the alazán. The horse was still under control, but was determined to get up to its comrades ; it was prevented from bolting by the firm hand of the rider, but it leaped and bounded in a manner that would have been trying to a *domador*. I saw that she could not pull him up, so I shouted to her to let him go, and in a few stretches he was alongside Charley's horse, and settled down to a long gallop. Meanwhile the boar was holding his own, if indeed he was not gaining on us, and was evidently making for the thick wood, that we could see

some distance in front. Charley saw this, and, closing towards me, he said that he would try and turn him to the open country on our left. He did try, but his horse was getting blown, and could not second his efforts. Whether the girl understood what he said, or whether she caught the idea from his movements, I do not know, but I saw her loosen the rein, bend slightly forward, and urge her half-bred to its top speed. She rode for the pig as a gaucho rides for a bullock, to get alongside and make him turn ; but she forgot that the smaller animal could rush straight on, and under the horse's belly—and that is what occurred. Her horse shied and swerved, but by sheer horsemanship, and almost without using her whip, she brought him close to the flank of the javalí. Instead of turning towards the open the animal made for the forest ; for one second he hesitated until the alazán was heading him, then he turned short round, dashed under his belly, and caught his off fore leg with his tusk. The horse stumbled and then recovered itself, but only to bound into the air, probably with pain, and came down with a crash to the ground. Dolores was not under him, for I saw horse and rider on the earth, and noticed that there was a space between them, but what I also noticed was, that the boar had turned, and was going to take its revenge on the dismounted, and defenceless rider. For a moment I looked round ; Willis was coming up close, but Charley was some distance away, with his horse pumped ;

and then I rode not *for*, but *at* the javall. I believe I caught it well on the near shoulder, but the lashings of the lance gave way, the knife was turned off, and certainly I never drew blood ; but I did, or my horse did something, more effectual ; he caught the boar with his knees, just on the ribs, in the very middle of its carcase, and threw it yards away, and then he toppled over, and lying on the ground were left the bodies of the pig, the horse, and the man, slightly mixed up and somewhat confused.

The expedition was a most decided failure, and we never refer to it in our family circle. On one occasion Charley and I were dining with friends in St. James' Square, and got on pig-sticking, but the lecture I received, when I recounted our Paraguayan exploits, was so lengthy, and so severe, that I have never again ventured to enter the club where Indian officials of the military, civil, covenanted, uncovenanted, telegraphic, and forest services do love to congregate. The point of the spear that I ought to have used was diagrammed and re-diagrammed ; I was told what its weight should be, and what was the proper length of the lance ; and I was informed that a race across a flat country without the chance of a spill at a "nullah" was not sport ; that our horses must have been sticks, for even a tattoo can get up to a pig ; and altogether I was thoroughly ashamed. But sometimes, I have asked myself the question, whether the Indian creature, called a pig by these gallant gentle-

men of the club, could have been quite as quick and savage as the *tayasú*, or *pecari*, that put me *hors de combat* in Paraguay, for I am willing to back a horse from off the Buenos-Ayrean prairies, not only against a tattoo, but against the best Waler, in India.

I was unconscious for a considerable time after my tumble, and when I came to my senses I found myself supported in Charley's arms, while Dolores bathed my head. By degrees I recovered all my faculties, and heard how the boar had ended his career. My horse must have struck him a severe blow, for when he rose he staggered, and then stood savagely at bay. Willis and Charley had had time to come up; the latter rode at him with his spear, the point of which happily did not turn, and the former gave him the *coup de grâce* with his carbine.

They all gave me credit for having saved the life of Dolores, in spite of my assurance that the praise was due to the horse, and not to me. I accepted with much greater pleasure the few kind words of thanks that she said to me in Spanish, and the hand that she held out, and from that moment dates the change in her manner, and the friendship that exists between us. Happily she had not been thrown, but had only rolled out of the saddle, and so had escaped with a slight shaking; but the *alazán* had received a bad wound, the boar having ripped up his fore-hand, and for many days she rode my horse, which carried her well.

We reached home in good time for the midday breakfast, and were glad of a long siesta, after an exciting morning's work.

On this, the last night of our stay in the Estancia Observacion, there was held a solemn conference, and, for the first time, we were invited to the apartments occupied by Doña Ramóna. The invitation came to Willis and myself, through Charley, and when we entered the room, we found him seated between the señora, and her daughter. The proceedings opened with the introduction of maté, and in addition we were offered *cerveza inglesa*, or bottled beer, if we wished to partake of it, and then Doña Ramóna took up the parable. She was very grateful to the *Capitán Inglés* (looking at Charley) for offering his escort in the up journey, but did the caballeros know the dangers on which they were rushing. Tigers, pumas, tapirs were as nothing before their leaden balls; but in the direction they were going they would probably encounter the savage Caaguas, and perhaps the still more terrible Mbayas, wild Indians of whom even the Caaguas lived in fear. To poor Paraguayan women they were not a source of dread. Before the war they had been in subjection, and had even worked on her husband's estate, but Quien sabe? what they might be now, if they knew that rich Englishmen were travelling through the country. Why should the caballeros cross the sierra and seek danger?

Surely there was game enough, without running further risk.

We both looked at Charley, for we thought that, from his greater intimacy, he had the first claim to act as our spokesman, but his knowledge of Spanish was unequal to grasping the sense of the flowery language to which he had been listening, and much less to responding to it. "I understand the greater part of what Doña Ramóna has been saying," he interposed, "but not the whole of it, and I shall be obliged if you will tell her our plans."

He addressed Willis, who at once acceded to his request, and, facing Doña Ramóna, he said:

"Señora, before leaving home we had traced our route, and had determined to cross the Cordillera, and perhaps even penetrate to the Great River. It is a country of which very little is known, and we are curious to see it. As for the Indians we do not fear them, more than we do the jaguars; we wish them no harm, and, unless they annoy us, we shall leave them in peace. But your party is but poorly armed, and though you say that the Caaguas will do you no harm, yet you have more reason to dread the Mbayas than we have, for they have always been enemies to Paraguayans. When the point is reached where our routes diverge we shall be more anxious about your party than about ourselves—"

"And where is that point, Don Felix?" asked the señora.

‘The Cerro Corá is the most northerly point that we shall reach, and then we turn to the east, while you, we are told, intend going to Tacurupitá. Think again, Señora, before you venture on such a dangerous journey, or at least wait until we have had time to explore the country, and send you a messenger to tell you about its condition.’

“Thanks for your advice, Señor, but if *él Capitán* (bowing to Rayne) will permit us, we will accept your escort so far as our journeys lie together. After that we must trust to circumstances.”

“Perhaps,” said Willis, “you could obtain an escort from the Cavalry detachment that has gone to *Bella Vista*.”

“The Major Ramirez,” said the lady, in a dignified and sarcastic tone, “was one of the officers who stood by his chief to the very last ; he was present at the last fight on the *Aquidabán*, when others who had received greater rewards, and speedier promotion, were absent from their duty. I would gladly accept the Major’s protection, but he has other duties to perform than that of escorting women.”

The attack was evidently directed at Willis, between whom and the señora, I had frequently noticed, that there was no great affection. His face coloured up, and evidently he was prepared to make a sharp retort, but, looking across the table where Dolores sat, he restrained himself, and, muttering “*Qué importa*,” he rose from his seat, and con-

versed for some minutes, in an undertone, with Charley.

Then Charley turned to me and said, "Willis tells me that we may perhaps have a rub with the Indians, and he recommends us to take precautions. By all means! by all means! let us have advanced and rear guards, but, by-the-bye, how many men have we got. Beg pardon Willis, by Jove! you're a field officer, and here am I taking the command."

"It could not be in better hands, Captain Rayne," said Willis, very gently. "If I once held the rank that you mention it died with the army in which I was an officer, and to-day I shall be perfectly contented to serve as a trooper under your orders."

Doña Ramóna was evidently anxious to know the meaning of this confabulation carried on in English, and so I hastened to explain to her that Charley had been appointed commander-in-chief, and that the next morning we were to advance in military array. This announcement was gratefully accepted by Doña Ramóna, but when I rose to take leave of Dolores, that young lady inquired whether the commander-in-chief was bound to go in front and lead the column. I explained that this was by no means necessary, and that he might occupy any position that suited him.

The conversation, half in banter and half in earnest, had the effect that we started on our journey

the next morning in something like order. The advanced guard consisted of Estanislado, and a peon from Concepcion to act as *vaqueano*, or guide ; we three followed, then came the carts, the last being that of Doña Ramóna by her own wish, and the rear guard was formed by Carancho and Pepe. The señora journeyed in her own cart, and Dolores rode near it ; at least, she commenced the march in that way, but after a time she was induced to come to the front, on the plea that she would avoid the dust made by the carts, and joined our party, but always attended by Francisca, whom she called her *ama*, or nurse, and for whom she appeared to have a great affection. This was the woman who had watched by Charley's bedside, and she seemed to have contracted a fondness for him, and on his part he reciprocated the feeling, and was always showing her little acts of kindness.

The road that we were now following was chiefly through thickly wooded land ; in some places the forests were dense and the trees magnificent, but in others they were only yerbáles, or natural plantations, of the Paraguayan tea-plant, which do not grow to any great height.

The country seemed to get more wild as we advanced and left all habitations behind us, and now, for the first time, we met a tenant of the woods who disputed with the numerous birds the possession of the trees. This was the *carayá*, or devil monkey, a

brute three feet long, or high, without counting his tail. They go in bands, and are very mischievous ; frequently they have been known to overrun a sugar-cane plantation, and destroy it completely in one night. At first, they appeared singly, sitting high up, and chattering away as we passed. They then collected in numbers, and came lower down. We were amused at first, and did not care to shoot them, but at length they became so impertinent, that we were forced to send a charge of buck-shot among them. This drove them away squealing ; but they soon returned, and kept constantly travelling along the branches on both sides of the road, and following our march.

Once only did we see any signs of a habitation. We noticed a pathway diverging from the main road. It might have been made by wild animals constantly using it on their way to a watering-place, but to satisfy ourselves, Willis and I followed it for some distance. At length emerging from the forest, we came upon a small opening, in which stood a miserable hut, containing but one closed room, and a long open shed at the side. Under this was standing a very old woman grinding maize in a mortar made of a log of wood, with a pestle of the same material. She looked up as we approached, and gave a long shrill whistle. We dismounted, and Willis saluted her in Guarani, but though she muttered something, we could not understand what she said, and she looked

around her as though frightened. Suddenly there was a rush, and three girls sprang to her side. Probably their ages were between six and ten, but not one of them wore a particle of clothing. There was no shame about them ; only curiosity and fright. They looked at us with great fawn-like eyes, but would not say a word in reply to our questions. Then the old woman spoke to the elder girl, and she bounded away into the forest. Evidently she had gone to fetch someone, and so we waited. After a little time she returned accompanied by a man, whom we immediately decided was the father of the children. He was not encumbered with much clothing, but he had a shirt, and he carried in his hand a large axe. He looked surprised but not frightened, and he invited us into the shed, and replied freely to our questions. We learned from him that he had been one of the few who had escaped from the slaughter at Cerro Corá where Lopez died ; that he neither surrendered to the Brazilians, nor followed his vanquished comrades to the south, but remained by the side of his wife, who had been one of the women in Mrs. Lynch's train, and who had been taken ill with fever and ague. They found a resting place in the hut, in which we discovered him. There his children were born, and there his wife died ; now his wife's mother looked after the house. He earned a scanty living by collecting *maĩgaĩsĩ*, or caoutchouc, which abounds in this district, and this he took twice a year into

Concepcion and sold or exchanged for some few necessities ; he had patches of tobacco, mandioca, and maize, but the carayás were constantly rooting up, and destroying the plants. Yerba-maté he had all around him ; it was only necessary to pick and dry it ; and for animal food, the girls snared partridges and caught armadilloes.

We ventured to remark that his children had arrived at an age when a little clothing might be convenient, and he agreed that the eldest one was a big girl, and said that he should bring her a *tipóy* the next time that he went down to Concepcion.*

We told him where we were going to camp that night, and promised him a gun to keep off the carayás, if he chose to come for it, and then taking leave, we rejoined our party.

* *Pour les dames.* "Tipóy" has been translated "chemise," even by the few English ladies who have visited the country, but it is misleading to suppose that Paraguayan women go about, dressed only in that one undergarment. The Tipóy, in early days, may have been a single garment, but at the present time it is compound. The bodice is cut round the shoulders, and fringed with *ñanduti* lace, through which a ribbon is passed to tighten it round the neck ; the sleeves are very short, and also edged with lace. The skirt, or petticoat, is of stiff, starched, white material, that reaches half-way below the knee. So it would appear that a Paraguayan country girl has bare arms and feet, but it is stated that English ladies sometimes wear very short sleeves, and it is a fact that there are Scotch and Irish lasses who go about without shoes or stockings. If a Paraguayan girl does the same, she has at least one excuse, that she generally possesses a hand and foot, remarkable for their beauty and symmetry.

CHAPTER XIX.

LOVE AND TREACHERY.

THIS being our first day's march we made it a short one, for the bullocks, after a long rest and good feeding, were too fat for very heavy work.

Some time before sunset we pitched our camp, not far from a laguna, or lake, of considerable size, to which the guides could not give any name, but said that it was an *ypecub*, or spot where *ypeg* (ducks) of many sorts abounded. As the day declined this appeared to be the case, for numbers of them seemed to return to the water, probably from distant feeding-grounds, and we (Charley and myself) got our fowl-ing-pieces with the intention of having a shot at them. But we found that there was already a sportsman in advance of us, and a very silent and gunless one. While endeavouring to find a spot where we could get near the birds, we noticed on the surface of the water, and at some distance from the shore, a large gourd, evidently moving, but rather by fits and starts, than as though it was being carried by the current. For a considerable time we watched it, until

it reached the very centre of a large collection of birds. At first they appeared a little ruffled, as though dreading danger, but soon quieted down. Then suddenly we saw a duck disappear from the surface, and though we waited for its reappearance, it did not seem to rise again.

We gazed intently, and saw the same thing occur over and over again ; sometimes there was an interval of a few seconds, and then two or three ducks bobbed under water, and never turned up again. The whole thing was mysterious. We asked one another "Is it a cayman or a water-snake," with which the lakes are said to abound, but that did not seem to solve the difficulty, for why should a cayman or a snake fix a gourd, like a solar-topi, on his head ? At length our curiosity was satisfied. The gourd commenced to return to land, and as it reached shallower water, it rose higher and higher above the surface, and with it there emerged the body of a man. The Mameluke as usual—that inveterate and consummate poacher—was at the bottom of the mystery. Fixed on his head, like a diver's helmet, was a large *sapallo*, or pumpkin, in front of which were holes perforated for his eyes ; around his waist was his belt, his only clothing, and under this were drawn by the feet a number of ducks of varied sizes and plumage, completely surrounding his body, and effectually preserving him from any complaint on the score of indecency. His artifice was simple, but successful. As soon as

the ducks recognized that it was a pumpkin and not a formidable enemy, they allowed it to approach, and then the game was in the Mameluke's hands. He selected the birds that suited him best, caught them by the feet, and gently drawing them under water, fastened them in his belt. The subject caused us plenty of amusement that evening as we sat round the camp fire in the chilly evening, and recounted the story to Dolores.

The night was an unquiet one. For the first time we heard the snarling and growling of the jaguar at no great distance from our camp, and they made the horses and bullocks very restless; and then on two different occasions a number of carayás seemed intent on invading us; they came so close, and were so determined, that we had to turn out and fire upon them.

Our savage acquaintance of the previous day appeared just before we resumed our march, to ask for the gun that we had promised to him. He brought us tidings which caused us some uneasiness. Late on the previous evening, a Paraguayan, but a perfect stranger to him, had arrived at his rancho, and asked permission to remain for the night. This was granted, and he slept there, but gave no information as to whence he came, or whither he was going, and left at break of day. Willis, to whom the savage told the circumstance, said that we must inform the Commandant, and we accordingly repaired to Rayne.

Charley had accepted the command in the half jocular spirit in which it had been offered to him, but he had accepted it, and now he at once assumed the responsibilities of his office. "Willis," he said, "parade the men at once, and let us see if anyone is missing."

Our men all answered to their names, but of those of Doña Ramóna, one was missing. "Let us tell the señora," said Rayne, "perhaps she has sent him on some duty." We accordingly went to the ladies' cart, and Willis stated what had occurred, and inquired whether he had left by her instructions.

"No, indeed, Don Felix," she replied ; "the poor lad was frightened at coming so far, and probably, when he heard the jaguars last night, fear got the better of him, and he has gone back to the Estancia."

We were obliged to be content with this answer, for we had no right to question the truthfulness of Doña Ramóna's statement ; but two things struck me, though I did not mention them at the time : first, that for a journey of considerable risk her servants did not appear to be very trustworthy, and secondly, that the boy had absconded before we had even heard the snarling of the jaguars, for that did not occur until the middle of the night, and, to have reached the savage's hut late in the evening, he must have left the camp shortly after sunset.

There was however nothing further to be said, and as the camp had been struck, and the bullocks yoked

to the carts, we at once commenced our second day's march. It was heavy work. We were now at the base of a spur of the Cordillera of Amanbay which we proposed to round, instead of crossing ; the road inclined upwards and was very rough, and the cattle had a steady job of collar, or rather head-work, for the yokes are fastened to their horns. We crossed the Arroyo Negla about midday, and shortly afterwards we got into more open country and caught sight of the Cerro Corá away on our right. The *cerro*, or hill, has all the appearance of being a part of the mountain spur, which has been cut down the front perpendicularly. It stands up abruptly on the plain some 80 or 100 feet high, and the only means of access is by a winding road, or ramp, from the rear. It is a position that Lopez might have held for a long time against very superior forces, had he been provided with supplies ; but, unfortunately for him, he left its security and was caught and killed, in the bush between the river Aquidabán and its branch, the Aquidabanaguí. We camped that night on the banks of the former, probably on the very spot that the Brazilians occupied, on the night before the battle.

During the day Willis had had some conversation with the man who acted as guide, and from him we learned that the direct road to Tacurupitá, the supposed destination of Doña Ramóna, went north from this point, while we ought to take a more southerly direction, and strike into the road from Panadero.

We neither of us believed for one moment that Doña Ramóna would take the direct road, for we were both firmly convinced that, on some excuse or other, she would stick close to us. That excuse was easily found. The next morning, when we were preparing to start, two more of her men were missing, and they had taken with them one of her horses. The matter had become very serious, and we at once held a council.

Charley, in my opinion, was living, to speak clearly, in a fool's paradise. In Dolores he had found a charming and delightful companion, and many things inclined me to think that he was growing very much attached to her. It seemed incredible that she should have any part in the plot, if there was one, and yet surely she must know something about the movements of her mother's servants. Doña Ramóna's male attendants were now reduced to two, barely sufficient to look after the bullocks, and quite inadequate for the protection of a party of women on a long, and dangerous journey. There was no reason to suppose that any accident had happened to the missing men, and, if they had deserted, the señora was to be pitied, and it became our duty to help her in her difficulties; but if she had deliberately sent them away, we ought to discover her reason for doing so.

When I put the case before Charley, and expressed to him our suspicions that the men had been sent back to give notice of our movements to

the Cavalry, who were probably only a day's march behind us, he was very angry, and again charged Willis with raising unworthy doubts; but the time had gone past when his temper was to carry everything before it, and I said to him plainly: "You have taken command of this expedition, and you are bound to adopt every precaution to render it successful. It may be that our suspicions of Doña Ramóna are unjust, but ask her for an explanation, and, if it is satisfactory, we will withdraw every word we have said, and make ample apologies. You must confess that it is singular, for a lady to start on a long and arduous journey, with such untrustworthy servants, and you must remember that her men were not picked up at hazard in Concepcion, as ours were, but that she brought them with her from Asuncion. One would think, therefore, that she knew something about them, and yet, at the first growl of a tiger, they run away."

He acknowledged that there certainly was ground for inquiry, and said, "Let us go together and ask her to explain."

We found the señora and Dolores sitting together, the latter in a riding habit, ready to start, but instead of looking bright and happy as she usually did, this morning she appeared very dejected, and I rather think had been crying. She only exchanged a few words with us, and then withdrew.

Charley was hesitating as to the way of opening the

conversation, when Doña Ramóna turned to me, and commenced it.

"You would hardly think, Don Arturo, that anyone except mighty hunters like yourselves, would care for this hard life of travelling day after day, but Dolores was always fond of riding, and living in the open country, and just now, when I told her that we must give up the journey and turn back, the poor child burst out crying.

"Turn back! Give up the journey!" we all exclaimed in tones of surprise. Charley rose from the bullock-yoke on which he was seated, and stamped up and down, evidently thinking that his happy sunny days were coming to an end; and Willis and I looked at one another in amazement, for if Doña Ramóna was prepared to relinquish the journey when we were within a few miles of the goal, that we had imagined she knew of, then indeed our suspicions were unjust and unfounded.

"Yes, indeed," she went on; "what can we do? I cannot trust the men. First there was Carlos, who left me the night before last; and yesterday I heard that Pancho was dissatisfied, but was afraid to go alone, and he has induced Tomás to accompany him. To-morrow, perhaps, the others will desert, and we shall be left, a number of women, without even a bullock-driver. There is no help for it, but to give up my project."

Now, I regret to say, that at this critical time

when, perhaps, we could not have done more wisely than adopt Doña Ramóna's proposal, and facilitate her journey back to Concepcion, our gallant Com-mandant was missing. I had noticed a white hat with ostrich plumes, moving slowly in the brushwood at no great distance, and so, I presume, had he, for the length of his quarter-deck tramp had been extended at each turn, until at length he disappeared from our view, and shortly afterwards I noticed a wide-awake very close to the plumes. It was necessary, however, to give some answer, for we had presented ourselves with the intention of instituting a severe cross-examination, and it would hardly do to confess that we were beaten, and to withdraw no better off than when we came. I was by no means satisfied, and felt that if we were ever to get the treasure securely into our possession, the best thing for us was to separate from Doña Ramóna as quickly as possible; but that would entail Charley's separation from that other treasure, of which Willis had spoken, and I very much doubted whether he would agree to it. At one moment I thought of asking the señora to remain where we then were, with Charley as a protector, but then, if we found what we were seeking for, we should not turn back, but probably should make for the Alto Paraná.

"Señora," I said, "your peóns are very few even for the journey back to Concepcion. We are now within a short distance of the ground on which, we

are led to believe, that there is good sport. What do you say to continuing your journey as far as we go, and remaining there a few days, and then we will either escort you back, or place some of our peóns at your disposal ? ”

She did not jump at once at my proposal, but after some little consideration she said :

“ There is a good deal in what you say, Don Arturo, and I really think that, under the circumstances, it is the best thing for me and for Dolores. Nay, more, perhaps I may still be able to reach Tacurupitá, for there is a road from Chiriguele, and with some of your peons I could travel up. I accept your offer gratefully, and, as it is getting late, let us be moving.”

“ One word, Doña Ramóna,” I said, “ before we start. The loss of your remaining peóns would affect us very considerably, for we have not enough men for your cart and our own ; and I would, therefore, ask you to authorise Captain Rayne, who is in command, to take measures to prevent their desertion.”

“ I do not think,” she replied, “ that there is any fear of their going, but you have my full powers to take any steps that you may consider necessary.”

The noisy and unclerical language, that the drivers used to obstreperous bullocks, and the loud creaking of the wheels, soon announced to Charley that we were on the move, and very shortly he and Dolores joined our party. All traces of tears and of depres-

sion had disappeared, and I had never seen her looking more beautiful or happier. Even to me, whom she had formerly kept at a distance, she showed the greatest amiability, and I told her part of what had passed with her mother, and why we were still to continue to journey on together, while Charley, riding on in front with Willis, was probably listening to the same story. It was a lovely morning, the sun had as yet not recovered his full strength after the last night's rest, and even when he began to pour down upon us all his rays, the gentle south-wester that was blowing, kept us comparatively cool. I could have listened to Dolores for hours, as she told me in soft and musical Castilian of her life in Asuncion, of her Brazilian friends, and of her hopes of shortly visiting Buenos Ayres, in her imagination the greatest city of the world. But our quiet conversation was, all too soon, abruptly closed.

The great mongrel dogs that accompanied the cartmen had evidently found something, for they were baying and rushing about in a state of wild excitement. We turned off the road to see what was happening, but before we reached the scene, some animal burst away over the plain, with the dogs behind it. "What is it?" asked Dolores, and Willis, as he gave the spur to his horse, and passed us, heard the question and shouted "Guazú ará!" I looked to Dolores for a translation of this Guarani name, and she said "It's a lion," and away she went in pursuit.

I naturally followed, and so appeared to do every man, who had anything to carry him; while the Mameluke, on his bare legs, was close up to the dogs and was cheering them lustily. We were racing in the open and I got a good view of the quarry, a cougar, or South American lion. Of lionine qualities he had very little about him except his colour—a reddish brown, and he seemed to me very like a big St. Bernard dog; but he had plenty of pluck and speed, and with his head thrown back, his feet stretched out, and his long tail beating the air, he might well have passed for a lioness. The alazán was still on the sick list, but my *zaino*, with the light weight of Dolores, held his own and led the field; then came Charley, and after him the ruck, in which I noticed Estanislado loosening his lazo. The dogs were large and fierce, but they could not keep the pace, and were tailing off. It seemed to me very probable that the puma would give us the slip unless we finished him with a rifle, when Estanislado rode to my side and said "Shall I lazo him, patrón?" "By all means," I said, "if you can."

It is perfectly wonderful what a gaucho can get out of a horse. We were all riding our best, at the top speed of our horses, but when he got the word from me, he seemed to lift his mount in a miraculous manner. He certainly had no whip, and I do not think that he used his spurs, but with a movement of the bridle he made his horse rise to the occasion.

He passed me, he caught up Charley, and with his lazo whirling in the air he headed Dolores, and came within throw of the puma; then he let it go, and neatly and beautifully it fell over the head of the chase. The hunt was finished, Estanislado checked his horse, and as the rope tightened round the puma's neck, it made endless bounds and leaps to release itself. The dogs rushed in, and with the greatest difficulty were prevented from tearing it to pieces; while Carancho dismounted, watched his opportunity, and at length got close up to the poor brute, now half strangled, and with his knife ended its existence. He was a splendid specimen, as heavy as a jaguar, but with thicker and more clumsy limbs; happily the puma is less ferocious, or the two combined would hardly leave a domesticated animal, in the whole district. We left the men to take off the skin, which is now an ornament in Charley's sanctum at home, while we rode on, to seek shelter under a neighbouring clump of trees. All formation and discipline had been forgotten, when the puma came upon the *tapis*, and we found that the carts were not even in sight, but after a time they appeared and reached us in safety. A fire was soon lighted, and our breakfast, or mid-day meal, made ready. The Mameluke had provided himself with a large steak from the lion, which he roasted with the greatest care, and when done to a turn he very politely brought it on the *asador*, or roasting spit, and stuck it into the ground in

front of us. He explained to Willis what good eating it was, and this Willis assured us was the fact, and proved his belief by cutting off a *tajo*, but the remainder of the party declined with thanks. We never could induce Doña Ramóna to join us at meals, and I do not think that we had ever broken bread with her since our first meeting, but Dolores often made one of our party at these picnics, and praised Carancho for his cooking. If we had no *recherchés* dishes, at least there was a constant variety.

After a good rest, we started again in our old jog-trot way. The country was more open, and we were no longer tied to one narrow road, as we had been formerly, but Willis and I kept our proper position in front of the carts, while Charley and Dolores rode together on our left flank, evidently in earnest conversation.

"We have given the horses rather a long spurt to-day," said Willis; "and I think we may as well call an early halt this afternoon. If I do not miscalculate, to-morrow about midday we shall come upon the spot where Valentin and his comrades lie buried, and that is close to the place of which we are in search. We shall want our horses to fix our position, and so we had better let them rest."

"By all means," I replied; "let us stop whenever you like. And we had better tell Rayne; but measures should be taken to look after Doña Ramóna's men, for the nearer we come to the place we are

seeking, the greater is the danger of our being betrayed."

"I will go to Rayne," he said, "and recommend the proper precautions," and he rode off and left me.

Another hour's march brought us to an orange grove. It is probable, although we could see no signs of it, that in former days there had been a station of Jesuits at this spot, from which the yerbales had been worked, for it was their system to plant oranges around any village that they founded. A grove has its advantages and disadvantages. Mosquitoes avoid it, and that is a comfort to man and beast; but under the trees, and for some distance round, the ground is nearly bare. There is no grass or herbage of any description, which is a defect as regards the beast. Here, however, we decided to remain, and, unsaddling, proceeded to make ourselves comfortable.

We three had been killing time for about a couple of hours, smoking and talking, and it was growing dusk when we saw approaching, from the opposite side of the camp, to that occupied by Doña Ramóna and her attendants, a figure in white. It was that of Francisca, and she brought a message to Rayne, who immediately rose, and followed her.

A good half hour had passed when he returned, and addressing Willis, inquired of him, "Will you tell me what instructions you have given to the men you left in our rear?"

"Not to permit anyone to leave the camp," replied Willis.

"That is right ; but please impress on the guard that the order includes *women*, and instruct them to stop anyone attempting to leave, and not to allow them to go forward, or to come back. I will give you my reasons when you return."

Willis departed without a word, and Charley took his place at my side.

For some seconds there was silence, as I awaited an explanation from him. But when he spoke his question seemed to have very little relation to the instructions he had just given.

"Arthur," he said, "what is your opinion of Dolores Susini?"

"How do you mean?" I answered. "Is it with reference to our talk of this morning, about being watched?"

"No ; that is not the question ! What do you think of her personally ; is she amiable and lady-like, and do you think she will make a good wife ?"

Of course, I knew what was coming, but I answered what I believed to be the absolute truth. "I think her the most amiable and lovable girl I ever met, with one sole reservation that I need not mention. As to her making a good wife, he will be a happy man who wins her. But if her intended husband be a foreigner, I think he should bear in mind certain circumstances."

"And what may they be?" he asked.

"Well, she is a Paraguayan; I won't say that's a defect, but her language is different, and in all probability her religion is so too. You know a great deal more about her than I do, Charley; for to me she has shown the greatest reserve, I might almost say dislike, until lately. But if she is to be your wife, I congratulate you most heartily, and I will do my best to win her regard."

"She is a Roman Catholic, as her mother was before her; she speaks very perfect English, with a very pretty accent; she does not dislike you, but has a great regard for you; she is not a Paraguayan, but the child of English parents, and born in an English dependency; her name is not Dolores Susini, but Alice Granton, and she has promised to be my wife. Now old man! if that is not a categorical answer, I don't know what is, and there! Thanks for your congratulations," he concluded, as he grasped my offered hands in his.

"Alice Granton! and, Charley, when did you know all this?" I inquired.

"To-day! only to-day; this morning, when we went to grapple Doña Ramóna, I saw that the child had been crying, and so I got away as quickly as possible, to go and comfort her. I hardly know what passed, I told her that if she was going back, I must go back too; on that point, I don't think she expressed any opinion, but when I advised her that we

had better go hand-in-hand along the pathway that leads through love to marriage, she seemed, after much hesitation, to understand the meaning of my vague Spanish, and at last, when I refused to be called Capitán, or Don Carlos, she whispered Charley. That *Charley* was never spoken by Paraguayan or Spanish lips, and so the story came out, and has been elaborated, during the day, while we have been riding together.

"And all the time we have been together she has never spoken a word of English—it is very extraordinary," I remarked.

"Well, it certainly displays great self-control," he said; "but the explanation is simple, and it will surprise you to learn that you were the cause of it."

"I! Oh, there is Willis," I said.

"Yes," replied Charley; "and I may as well tell my story to the two of you at once. Well, Willis?"

"I have given the men their orders," Willis reported, "and we have fastened up the dogs in a wide semi-circle, so that if anyone approaches, or leaves the camp, their baying will give us timely notice. Everything seems quiet at present."

"Yes," said Charley, "I do not think there is danger of anyone going to-night, but it was well to take proper precautions. I told you that I would give the reasons for keeping guard, and so I will; but I vote for supper first."

Supper over, we lighted our cigarettes, and select-

ing a spot where we were safe from being overheard, we sat down to listen to Charley's account.

"You will remember, Willis," he began, "Penistone's search in Asuncion and its neighbourhood for an English girl, the niece of a friend of his, who was supposed to be somewhere in this country. Well! it turns out that the lady, whom we have known as Dolores Susini, is Miss Granton; and I may mention *en passant* that I have asked her to be my wife, and that she has been good enough to accept me."

"You have won a very beautiful bride, Captain Rayne. Whatever may be the result of our search, whether we succeed or not, you, at least, must always have a good word for Paraguay, which seems to have given you back your health, and from which you will take its brightest jewel."

The two men rose, and joined hands warmly, and then Charley went on :

"There is a good deal to be done yet, Willis, before the jewel, as you gallantly call her, is my own. But, with Penistone's and your aid, I believe that we may overcome all ordinary difficulties. But now for the explanation. Major and Mrs. Granton, when they arrived here, secured a nurse for their child, and that nurse was Francisca, who watched over me during my illness, and who is now here as Miss Granton's attendant. She appears to be devoted to her young mistress, and, I think, is thoroughly trustworthy.

When Mrs. Granton died Francisca took the child in her arms, and carried it down to Asuncion. There she went to a former mistress, Doña Ramóna, and that lady at once took the orphan into her charge, and has maintained and cherished her ever since. She knew of the rewards offered for the recovery of Miss Granton, but she never claimed them; because, if she had accepted the money, she would probably have lost the child. You must bear in mind this lady's charity and generosity, notwithstanding any strictures that I may have to pass upon her conduct, later on. Our arrival in Paraguay was a matter of public notoriety, but more than that the object of our journey was also known to certain people. Whence the information was derived I cannot say; but this is certain, that Doña Ramóna told Alice that a person named Don Arturo Penistone had arrived in Paraguay, and was searching for her; and that if he should succeed in discovering her, she would be carried off to a convent in some foreign country, or be deprived of her liberty in some other way.

"Miss Granton is a fair linguist: she speaks Italian and Spanish, and has more than a smattering of French and Portuguese; and in all these languages she was told she might speak, but she was warned that English would betray her; and that until this Don Arturo and his companions were out of the country, she ought never even to lisp a syllable in that language. And she was further told that the journey to Tacurupitá

had been arranged, in order that she might be removed, as far as possible, from the impending danger. So you see, Arthur, you were upheld as a bugbear to Alice, and, naturally, she treated you with coldness. But besides that, there was another reason, as she has told me, why she always ran away from you, and that was because she was afraid that you would find her out. She has told me how you cross-examined her one day at Observacion, and how frightened she was of betraying herself."

"She put me off the scent very cleverly," I interposed, "and yet I do not think that she said an untruthful word."

"This morning, as I have already said," Charley went on, "I asked Miss Granton to be my wife, and told her that I would speak to Doña Ramóna in the evening. But she begged me to let her give the tidings to that lady in the first place. I agreed, and she had her say just after we camped, and I am afraid that she passed a very bad quarter of an hour. I cannot tell you all that occurred, but, from what I have heard, Doña Ramóna seems to have lost her usual prudence and self-command, and in the excess of her anger to have divulged events that, under other circumstances, she would have retained in her own bosom. She charged her *protégée* with disloyalty to the country that had adopted her, with treason to the Church that received her into its bosom (for as they were not certain of her religion,

Alice had been baptized again, and christened Dolores), and with ingratitude to the family that brought her up, and cherished her. For her part, she snatched her from her heart. She would forget years of love and attachment, but the Church would not sanction, and the Government would not permit, her marriage with this foreigner, this *gringo*! this thief! For what were these Englishmen but robbers? Why had they come to the country, except to search for the private property of her distinguished relative, the late Marshal Lopez, who had been driven to hide his possessions in order to save something for his children, from the hateful Brazilians. Probably they had heard of its existence from that deserter, Don Felix (this was one for you, Willis), but they will be checkmated.

“‘I hold a power,’ she said, ‘from the heirs of the Marshal, to recover his property for their benefit. I have asked and obtained the assistance of the Government; there is a troop of Cavalry within a day’s march; Ramirez, the commandant, knows every step that we have taken, and is prepared to surround these freebooters in the very moment, that they are seizing the treasure. We are near the spot, I know; and Inez and Felicia (these are the two girls) are ready to start, whenever I give them the signal, to call the troops down, and catch the bandits red-handed. And then, bah! for your gringo lover! four bullets for him, and for each of his companions!—and

you! you ninny! you fool! have I not left you with him constantly, so that you might learn something about their doings? Did I not send you to the board-hunt, because I believed it was only an excuse to look for the treasure? and what have you found out? Nothing! When I have questioned you, you had nothing to tell, and why? because you let him talk to you of love, instead of finding out his plans!’

“You will, I think, both of you, from your knowledge of Miss Granton, understand that she was greatly distressed; it was not so much the long tirade of abuse and vituperation that hurt her, as the reproach of ingratitude, and the sudden change from kindness and love, to cruelty and heartlessness. But she said very little; she tried to soften her adopted mother’s resentment; she explained that she had never been told that she had the duty to perform of prying into our projects; and I fancy that she got a little angry, as she expressed her belief that I was not a highwayman, and vouched for the fact that she had never heard from my lips, a word about the treasure. In this she was perfectly truthful; I confess to you, almost with shame, that, partly on account of my illness, and partly on account of the pleasures of convalescence, I have completely shunted the whole question; I have been careless, and utterly forgetful of my share of responsibility in our partnership; but having made this confession, and trusting in your absolution, now I am all there; I am ready and willing

to do my share of the work in searching for your treasure, and I feel assured that you will both lend me your aid in securing *mine*. Alice, with the fear of that threat of four bullets being carried into effect, sent Francisca to seek me, and told me what had passed ; but she is as honest as the day ; she will tell me no more about Doña Ramóna's secrets, and I will not ask for further explanations. We must counter-plot ; and I do not see why three strong men, well supported and well armed, should not resist the representative of the Lopez family, with a troop of Cavalry at her back. I have spoken."

We sat silent for some time, each engaged in his own thoughts, and it was Willis who first resumed the conversation.

"I told you at home," he said, "when we first planned this expedition, that there would be many claimants to the property of Lopez, should it ever be discovered. Here we already have two, Doña Ramóna and the Government ; for, although the Cavalry is sent for the purpose of supporting her rights, yet you may be certain that she will never touch a penny of it, if the Government can once put its hand upon it. So it seems to me that, so far as relates to the Señora, it is a matter for a compromise between her and ourselves, and that, if this were fully explained to her, we might get her assistance, instead of her opposition. But then comes the question of the Government. I do not know anything about the

law in such cases, but I have heard, even in our own country, that when a lot of old coins are dug up, after lying hidden for many years, it is called 'treasure trove,' and becomes the property of the Crown, and I should think that something similar would apply here. It hardly seems necessary to discuss at this moment who is the owner; the first question is to find what we are looking for, and to find it without creating a disturbance, for of this I am certain, that should the Cavalry come down upon us, just as we are touching the prize, and they should seize upon it, we have no right to resist them with arms. The soldiers under Ramirez are really police—a civil force; we are travellers, subjects of a friendly nation, and if the civil authority interferes with us unnecessarily, the resource that we have is an appeal to the representative of our Government in Asuncion. But apart from specious reasoning, I confess to a personal motive in recommending abstention from scuffling and quarrelling. I have held a commission from the Paraguayan Government; I have fought side by side with Paraguayan soldiers; and on Paraguayan territory I can never take hostile action against any legal authority. Let us cross the frontier if we can, and then I don't care what may happen."

"You are getting warm, Willis," I said; "anyone would think that Charley and I were advocates for blood and slaughter, but I assure you that although he has his Mannlichers, and other terrible weapons,

and I am the owner of a rifle and a revolver, yet our most ardent desire is never to fire a shot against any human being. But where is this frontier of which you speak, on passing which you will become a fire-brand?"

"Don't be nasty, Penistone. If you cannot appreciate my motives, Captain Rayne, who has been a soldier, can do so," Willis retorted. "The old frontier was the Alto Paraná, a long distance from here, but after the war the Brazilians seized an enormous area, and made the Siérre Amanbay the line of demarcation. If we can pass the siérre without a conflict, I shall consider that I have a right to defend, even with a weapon in my hands, any attack on property that I may have brought from Paraguay."

"And how about the Indians?" I inquired.

"I spoke of civilized authorities," said Willis, "and not of savages—"

"Arthur," said Rayne, "you are creating difficulties that at present do not exist, and you are making mountains out of mole-hills. Willis is certainly right; we must act with caution, and we must avoid any collision with the Cavalry. I have been thinking over the whole business, and my opinion is, that although Ramirez is not far off, yet that none of his soldiers are actually watching us. It is very clear, and he knows it, that if we found any spies in our neighbourhood, we should take care not to approach the object of our search. He therefore waits for instructions from our

camp, and those instructions are to be carried by Inez and Felicia. Doña Ramóna would only part with the two cartmen in the last emergency, and therefore the girls are to be the messengers, but as neither will go alone, we may regard them as one envoy, and the last one at the Señora's disposal—only to be used when the precise moment has arrived, viz., when the treasure has been discovered. We want time, not only to dig it up, but also to put a safe distance between ourselves and the Cavalry, and my proposal is, that if the girls should be sent away, we should leave Doña Ramóna under the impression that they have really started; let them get outside the camp, and then capture them, and put them in some place of safety. The Señora will patiently await the arrival of the Cavalry, and Ramirez will just as patiently wait for instructions, and in this way we may gain two or three days at least."

We thought the advice good, and determined to follow it, and then, as it was far into the night, we turned in.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PLAINS OF CHIRIGUELE.

THE next morning I sought an interview with Doña Ramóna with reference to Alice. The lady did not display the same amiability which she had formerly shown; in fact, I might say, she was sullen. The talking was chiefly on my side. I gave her Alice's history, and told her that I was authorized by her uncle, her nearest relative, to search for her, and take her back to him. She said that she knew nothing about *Alice*, that her name was *Dolores*, and that although she (Doña Ramóna) was not the girl's mother, yet she had known her mother, who was a Paraguayan woman, and that she had adopted the orphan out of charity.

She gave me to understand, in pretty clear language, that our story was a pure fabrication; that the girl had taken Captain Rayne's fancy, and that in order to have some excuse for taking her away from her only guardian, we had trumped up a cock-and-bull story about her being born in England. I pointed out that the story was corroborated by Alice

herself; that she had been old enough to know her parents before she lost them, and to speak their language.

The language she had learned, she replied, at the Brazilian Minister's. It was a great pity she had been so intimate with his family, for she had got ideas into her head that had completely spoilt her for the quiet life of a Paraguayan girl. "But of course," she went on, "you have got papers and documents to prove all that you say, and to claim the girl." This nonplused me, for, except some memoranda about her parents and their personal appearance, I had got nothing at all.

"The proofs will be presented when required," I said. "There have been advertisements in the papers for years, and there are many people in Buenos Ayres who know the story. Moreover, I am certain that Mr. Granton will acknowledge, with a generous hand, the kindness that you have shown to his niece, and will return fourfold the expenses that you have incurred on her behalf, in addition to paying the reward for her recovery that has long been promised. Alice, too," I added, "is entitled to some property left to her by her grandfather."

It had struck me that an appeal to her own interests might mollify her to some extent, and so it certainly did. I do not say that she was prepared to sell, or exchange, the girl for a consideration; but, knowing how she had used her for her own purposes,

I did not believe that her love and affection were boundless. Her only reply was that we had the power in our hands, and could do as we liked with a poor defenceless woman, who had not a friend within a hundred leagues : a statement scarcely in accordance with fact, considering that she was in communication with Major Ramirez, who certainly was not more than thirty miles away.

I had another duty that morning, and one of a more pleasant nature. I went in search of Alice, and found her walking with Charley. She looked as bright and fresh as the early morning, and was dressed, ready for the day's march, as neatly as if she had been going for a canter in the Park. I claimed my privilege as her guardian, and told Charley that I must have her to myself.

"Well, old man," he said, "don't be all day, for they are yoking the bullocks, and Willis is in a hurry."

Then he left us, and we found a log on which to sit and chat. Of course I congratulated her, and told her that the step she had taken in accepting Charley, would make her own relatives, and his, very happy ; that Mrs. Rayne would be delighted to receive her as her son's wife, and that, although Mr. Granton did not yet know Charley, I felt sure that they would like one another, when they met. I tried to place before her a picture of her home, and its surroundings, among which I mentioned there was

a young lady in whom I had a lively interest. Then she wanted to know more of that young lady, and we were still discussing the appearance of Grace Kearsney, when Charley came up to call us.

We soon started, a good deal impressed with our proximity to the object that had brought us so far ; for a good day's march, according to Willis, ought to bring us to the ground. Charley was rather silent at first, for Alice had refused to ride with us. She told him that the señora (she no longer called her mother) was out of sorts and miserable, and that she ought not to desert her ; and, after a time, he allowed that she was right, and acting with her usual kindness, and so he again grew bright and cheerful.

At midday we halted for breakfast, at which she joined us, taking at once to a custom which is unusual in Paraguay, for the women seldom sit down to meals with the men. And then, after the siesta, we journeyed on again.

At about four in the afternoon, Pepe, who was in front, pointed out to Willis a large open space, standing on high ground.

"Patrón," he said, "that is where the army encamped on the evening that Don Valentin was shot. And, look ! there is the tree against which, the Cabo and Eugenio were placed in front of a platoon, before the march on the following morning."

He turned his horse, and rode to the tree that he had pointed out ; and we saw him dismount, and

kneel down, with his head uncovered. We, too, raised our hats out of respect to the victims who had perished on that spot, and to their old comrade, who, after the lapse of many years, was breathing a prayer for the rest of their souls.

"Four or five miles more," said Willis, "will bring us to the place where the carts turned off from the main road; I shall know the place, for there was a large piece of water on our left as we came up the road, that leads from Panadero, and that will now be on our right."

Pepe returned, and for some time we rode on in a silence that was unbroken until he said, "Patrón, there is the break in the wood that leads up to the rancho."

"Yes, Pepe, I recognize it, and we will go later on, but not now. It seems strange, Penistone, to re-visit these spots, it is up there that Pepe and I buried Don Luis and the escort."

"It must be very painful, Willis," I replied, "and I can imagine how every circumstance of that terrible experience must come back to your memory."

We came upon a *laguna*, or piece of water of considerable extent, lying on our right, just as Willis had expected, and, passing along it to the far end, he pointed out the opening in the woods through which the carts of the Tesoreria General had passed, under charge of Don Valentin.

Our convoy was brought along the same

route, and we fixed our encampment under a fringe of trees that separated the road by which we had come, from a large open plain, *el Llano de Chiriguele*, that stretched out in front of us.

The evening was delightfully cool, and the quietude was only broken by the rustling of the birds among the trees as they sought their nests, and by the chattering of the monkeys, who had either been following us for days, or who passed the word from one band to another, to keep watch upon our proceedings. Charley had left us, probably for an evening stroll with Alice, and Willis and I, by the light of a lantern, studied the facsimile of Don Luis' sketch, and the plan that he himself had made. On the former I put an A for the rancho, and a B for the clump of trees, and it is clear that the line A B ought to cross T, the treasure. Then I tried A' as the mark of the rancho under the hill which Don Luis had not noted, and B' as the mark of the second clump, and I was surprised to find how deceptive Willis's change in the appearance of the ground would prove, unless the bearings had also been taken by compass. Of such bearings there was no indication on Don Luis' plan, and without local knowledge it would have been very difficult to find the spot, on which we were now encamped. The "pros," whether anyone could have been before us, the "cons," why they should not have been, we discussed at great length, and at a great waste of words, and loss of breath,

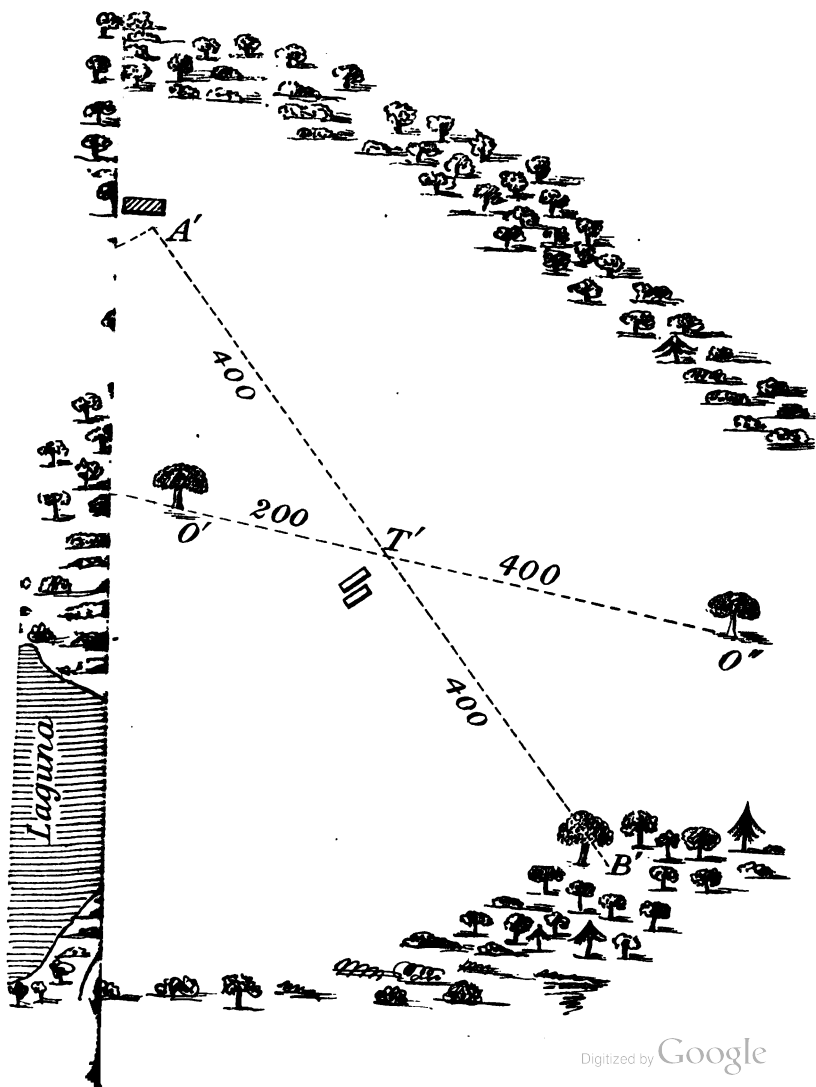
E.

nd. Cerro Corral

Corral to me at Concepcion.

A.P.

of Don Luis
working party.



for the next morning would decide the question ; but being actually on the site, and close to, as we hoped, the object of our journey, we naturally grew anxious. By-and-bye the moon rose ; it was nearly full, and lighted up the plain as clear as daylight.

“ It is just such another night as that on which I was first here,” said Willis. “ Let us go for a stroll, but take your arms, for it’s a bad tiger district.”

We started off, and after walking a few hundred yards, he said, “ The *ombú* that I burnt must have been just about here, and the treasure about 200 yards in front. Let us walk forward.” We counted the paces, and then looked around us. There was no appearance of any recent disturbance in the ground, but, as Willis said, it was mere guess-work on his part, whether we were actually standing over the treasure, and we must wait until daylight to find the exact spot. Then we passed on to the glade, in which Don Luis and the escort were lying in one grave. Peaceful enough it looked ; a long narrow avenue of green-sward, with a line of stately trees on either side, between which the moon threw its brightest rays. There was no cross or memorial, to mark the place where the victims of Lopez’s tyranny lay buried, but my companion seemed to recognize the spot, and stood in silence, perhaps in prayer, or perhaps recalling all the incidents of the sad day that he had passed here, many years ago. I walked on, and he rejoined me just as I reached the road. We turned down this towards

our camp, but had not proceeded far before we heard the sounds of Carancho's voice, and the music of his guitar. A little further on we caught the light of a camp fire, and, standing in the dark ourselves, we were able to see what was going on at its side. With saddles, and two empty wine cases, four seats had been arranged ; the outer ones were occupied by Pepe and Carancho, and between them sat Felicia and Inez, the damsels in waiting on Doña Ramóna. Felicia was next to Carancho, and leaning towards her, guitar in hand, he was evidently addressing to her a sonnet *à la gaucha*, while Pepe had one arm occupied in pressing, the somewhat rotund form of Inez.

"Well," said Willis, "that's a nice guard ; I think we had better visit it, and learn what it is up to."

But, nevertheless, it was a guard, and on the *qui vive*, for, as we came in sight, Pepe brought his rifle to the port, and challenged, in a clear ringing voice :

"*Alto, ahí ! quien vive ?*"

"*Patria !*" replied Willis, remembering the form of his old days of military service.

"*Qué gente ?*" rang out from the sentry.

"*Oficial del cuerpo !*"

"*Pasa, oficial del cuerpo !*" and with this permission we stepped into the light of the fire, and Pepe carried arms, while Carancho fumbled with his guitar.

"And what are these women doing here?" said Willis.

"Prisoners! Major," said Pepe.

"For what reason?"

"Trying to desert from the camp."

"Had they got any bundles?" inquired Willis.

"Yes, Major, here they are!" displaying two small packets tied in pocket handkerchiefs.

"And any letters?"

"I don't know, Major."

"Well, then, examine the bundles, and search their persons at once. Carancho, put away that confounded guitar, and see what that girl has got about her."

Carancho put away his musical instrument, seized his rifle, and standing at attention before Felicia, inquired, in an authoritative voice:

"What have you got in your bosom? Bring everything out!"

Paraguayan women have no pockets, in the usual acceptance of the word, but the upper portion of their light dress is a receptacle for everything.

But Felicia would not display her treasures, and merely replied, "I have got nothing but cigars."

"Shall I search her, patrón?" inquired Carancho.

But before Willis could reply, the girl retorted:

"You try, Carancho, and I'll scratch your eye out."

He had only one, and to that one Felicia evidently referred, so that undoubtedly she meant business.

It was so absurd to see the short stumpy figure of Carancho, drawn to its full height, yet only reaching

to her shoulder, standing before the tall, white-robed Paraguayan girl, fully prepared to carry out her threat, if he should attempt to touch her, that I actually burst out laughing, and Willis almost immediately joined in. It was evident that we should not get the letter, if there was one, by harsh means, but happily Pepe had approached Inez in a more amiable manner, and had succeeded where Carancho had failed.

"Here is the letter, Major," he said, handing Willis a folded piece of paper.

It was open, and together we read its contents. The writing was in Spanish, and the following is a literal translation :—

"We have arrived, as I believe, on the ground. Draw up closer, but do not show yourselves until I again send word. It is necessary not only to take the treasure from these thieves (*ladrones*), but also to recover my daughter Dolores, whom they have stolen. If requisite you must take her by force.—*Salud*."

So I had been mistaken in the opinion that I formed of Doña Ramóna, that a reward in money would satisfy her for the loss of her adopted daughter ; at least this was my idea, but on mentioning it to Willis, he said, "No! She is a sharp woman, and like all Paraguayans distrustful ; if we take Miss Granton now, she thinks that she will never get paid, but by taking her back to Asuncion she hopes to make her own terms. It is not for love of the lady that she wants her to be arrested."

Anyhow we were now warned of the dangers that we had to meet, and it was necessary to take imme-

diate action. We held a consultation, to which both Pepe and Carancho were parties. Willis explained that the girls must not be allowed to leave, and yet that Doña Ramóna must be led to suppose that they had left. Happily for us unexpected assistance was forthcoming, to arrange this matter satisfactorily. We had been thinking how it would be possible to keep a guard over the girls, with the small number of men at our disposal, but Pepe explained in a somewhat hesitating manner that he could respond for Inez, and that there was no necessity to take any precautions to prevent her leaving, for that they had agreed to be married ; and the girl herself blushed and confirmed this assertion. But our surprise was still greater when Carancho informed us, that in spite of the little passage of arms that we had just witnessed, he and Felicia were on the most friendly terms, and that we need have no fear about her. He must have stormed her heart with his guitar and singing, for he possessed very few other qualities to attract a handsome Paraguayan lass, like Felicia. However, we congratulated them all most heartily, and hoped to be present at the double wedding, whenever we might return to a civilized district.

Relieved of a great difficulty, we made arrangements for the girls to remain secreted in one of the carts, and to be kept out of Doña Ramóna's way.

On our return to camp we found Charley, and explained to him all that occurred. He was annoyed

at the determined opposition of the Señora, and was naturally anxious for the safety of Alice, but it was impossible to decide upon any line of action until we ascertained whether we should have only her to defend, or whether the treasure would be added to our cares, so we agreed to wait and see what the next day would bring forth, and turned in for the night.

The early dawn saw us all on foot, and before the sun had risen we were at work. Willis had made a table with some wine cases, on which was stretched the plan. No secrecy was now necessary! Doña Ramóna would have been welcome had she put in an appearance, and Alice, bright and fresh, already dressed for riding, actually did join us, and took a great interest in the explanations that fell from Willis's lips.

"That line AB," he said, "is imaginary; the termini, viz., the old tapera, and the tree that Valentin barked have both been burned, but the treasure, which we will mark T, should be there, halfway between A and B, and about 800 yards or horse-paces, from where we are sitting, looking towards the rising sun, just in front of which we ought to find the other rancho, which we will call A'. Now B' ought to be found about a mile from here, in that direction (pointing southwards), and halfway between A' and B' is where I left the carts, close to the imaginary treasure T'. If we can find this T with the dash, then I think we may easily find the original T; but with-

out it we shall have some difficulty. You see there are two triangles. This point, where we now are, and which we will call C, as standing for camp, is one angle, and A', the tapera, and B', the tree that I barked, are the others of the larger one, but they are not visible from here, and the distances between them are too long for a horse's paces to be trustworthy, but in the smaller triangle TA'T the distances are much shorter. The first thing to do is to find the rancho A', and I propose that we start at once."

We left our men in the camp, to be prepared in case the Cavalry should get weary of waiting, and should sweep down upon it, and also to prevent any intercourse between Doña Ramóna and her two maids. Then we prepared for our expedition, but had to wait some little time for Willis, who was searching for something in one of the carts. When he appeared, he carried with him two of the spears that we had used in the boar hunt, one of which he gave to me:

"These will come in very useful now," he said, "as landmarks, and we may as well take them. Captain Rayne, will you and Miss Granton ride up to that rising-ground that you see in front? You ought to see the tapera from the top, and from there you will be able to signal to us whether we are following a straight line from here."

Charley and Alice cantered off, she again mounted on her own alazán, now perfectly recovered, while we watched until we saw them ascending the hillock.

"Now," said Willis, "we will start ; here is a rosary, and try and count 800 paces. It does not matter at the outset whether the number be correct or not, but in this work the great thing is to be able to calculate distances on horseback." So we left at a walk, each with a rosario in hand, and without saying a word, but looking forward to where Charley and Alice stood out very prominently, as the sun rose behind them. For some minutes they appeared to be making signals that we should move to one side or the other, but soon it became clear that they had put us in the right line, for they remained stationary.

I am afraid that I soon lost my reckoning, for when Willis stopped short after pacing for some distance, and said, "I reckon that eight hundred, how many have you got ?" I found that only twelve beads had been separated which, at 50 paces per bead, would only make six hundred.

"Never mind," he said, "we will plant a lance here ; it's somewhere about the spot, and it appears to me that the ground round about has not been disturbed for years. What do you think ?"

"I can see no signs of digging at all," I replied.

"Well, that's a good sign ; let us join Captain Rayne."

We soon reached them, and Charley said :

"Why, Willis, you said we ought to find one tapera ; look ! there's quite a village."

It was perfectly true ; the one rancho sketched on

Willis's plan had grown into ten or twelve, scattered about, and occupying a considerable space, but yet there seemed to be a dulness, and want of life in the little hamlet, prettily situated as it was on the decline of the hill. We rode down to it, and shouted the usual salutation, but no one replied; not a dog barked, and we soon satisfied ourselves that the place was completely deserted. But who had occupied it, and how long ago, had there been residents? There were signs of an encampment of considerable size; there had evidently been a *patio* of at least 100 yards square, cleared of grass and stubble, for though it was again covered, the marks of the cutting still remained, and there were besides two long *tranqueras*, or tethering places, to which at least fifty horses could have been attached. The huts round the old building were rough, and hastily run up, but could have contained about the same number of men, and one of them had evidently been a store, for we found in it a *tercio* of yerba still sound, and an empty barrel that had contained flour, besides a number of pick-axes, spades, and other implements, some of them used, and others comparatively new, but considerably damaged by the atmosphere. We did not remain long, for Willis exclaimed:

"It is clear that people have been here before us, Penistone; but the question is, what have they been doing? Let us go and see."

He and I mounted at once and rode in the direc-

tion of the point marked B' where he had barked a tree. With the quick perception that is derived from long residence in rural and uncivilized districts, he noted marks that, by me, would have been passed without any special attention.

"Evidently," he said, "they have been passing constantly between the ranchos and some particular spot, for, if you only look, you will see the marks of a horse-trail here, where we are riding. Cannot you detect a difference of colouring between the line we are now on, and the grass on both sides? here it has been completely worn away, and not very long ago, for there, you see, the pathway is as clear as daylight."

When my attention was called to this point, I saw that he was correct, and before long the signs of recent workers were still more apparent. We entered on a piece of land over which we could hardly maintain the canter of our horses, without risk to our necks, for everywhere the ground was broken, and at every few steps we met with a mound of earth. Excavations on an extensive scale had evidently been made, and the loose earth had been thrown up on all sides, but in a short time, tropical nature had displayed her power, and had covered the lately formed tumuli with verdure.

The broken ground was, however, very deceitful, and we had to proceed cautiously, but, notwithstanding all our care, Willis nearly came to grief. He was in advance of me, and suddenly his horse swerved,

reared, and dashed away at right angles. He sat him like a centaur, or a gaucho, and I had never seen such a pleased and happy look upon his face, as when he reined in his *pingo*, and brought him up at my side.

"Since Rayne told me that he was going to marry Alice Granton, I have never," he said, "had such a pleasing surprise as this. I told you that she was one Paraguayan treasure, and now we have got the other one, in our hands. Don't you see, man, that the people who have been working here—the fools! I might call them—have been using Don Luis' plan as their guide, but have been utterly misled by the changes that I made in the features of the ground? It is a proud moment, and I could almost forgive Lopez. Here is the spot where I left the carts; there is the pit that the pseudo gold company of Buenos Ayres has dug, or some other prospectors that followed in its wake; and there, not a mile away, is the treasure—not the T' but the real and original T on my plan."

I looked down into the pit, to which he had pointed, an excavation some twenty feet square, and probably as deep, but covered with coarse grass, and half-filled with brushwood and gigantic weeds, and I came to the conclusion that Willis was right, and that it had been made under a delusion, for why should any human being, or party of human beings, dig such an enormous hole in the centre of a broad plain? There

are no elephants in Paraguay, and so it could not have been intended for capturing them, and for tigers it would be useless. But my cogitations were brief, for Willis quickly turned to business.

"We may take this," he said, "as the point T', and can measure the two sides of the triangle from here. You may be certain, that whoever made this hole believed that it was the spot marked on the plan, and carefully measured the distances. Captain Rayne and Miss Granton must be impressed into our service, and I believe that the alazán is a better pacer than anything we have got. Let us get back to them; we have nothing more to do here for the moment."

We made our way back as fast as we could, and told Charley and Alice of our discovery. Willis was in a state of excitement, such as we never should have expected from his usual sedate and quiet manner, and was almost rough, as he explained to Alice what had to be done; but she entered at once into the spirit of the enterprise, and promised to abide by his orders. The first instructions were, however, addressed to me and I was asked to dismount and to take one end of a tape, that he produced from a pocket. With it we measured off, on fairly level ground, two hundred yards, which Alice was requested to pace on the alazán. Then Charley followed, and after him I submissively obeyed an order to mount, and went over the same ground, Willis

making notes the whole time. When this operation was finished, he said :

"Now, Miss Granton, will you kindly count the paces of your horse, in a direct line to our camp? which we shall be able to distinguish from the top of that hillock. I must ask you to go alone, for you might be thrown out in your counting with another horse at your side. It is all open country and there is no danger, and Captain Rayne will follow at a short distance."

"I will do the best I can, Major," replied Alice, with a graceful bow, "and I assure you I am not at all afraid."

The alazán was fresh, and would gladly have carried off his young mistress at a canter, but Alice showed her business intent, by walking him off in the opposite direction for some distance, and then quietly bringing him round to the starting point. We accompanied her to the top of the hill, and, looking down on the plain, we could clearly distinguish, in the still early morning, the carts that marked our encampment.

Willis asked her to count four hundred spaces and then to stop. We watched her for some little distance, and saw that she was keeping a very direct line, and then Charley followed her.

"Now, Penistone," said Willis, "I am going to start from the pit that we have just visited, and take a straight line past the ombú. When I am exactly

in line with you and the camp, then you must stop me."

Alice had already halted, and shortly afterwards Charley stopped at some little distance from her, and then my attention was turned to Willis. From my position I could not see him leave the spot marked T' but I caught sight of him as he approached the ombú, and thence watched him across the open ground, and signalled to him to stop, just as I got him in line with our carts. I rode down to join the party, who had all dismounted.

"I want nearly thirty paces," said Willis, "but I think my horse's pace is longer than that of the one on which I rode over this ground before. Now, the question is to find any difference in the appearance of the grass, whether any portion is newer than the rest, for the ground appears all alike, and quite unbroken. However, the Mameluke is better for that work than we are. Let us go to breakfast, and send him."

We rode back to our camp, and there Willis gave his instructions to the Mameluke, who departed on his errand. Alice went to join Doña Ramóna, and we three sat down to the breakfast that Carancho had prepared.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FINDING OF THE TREASURE.

WE had hardly finished when the Mameluke returned. He had found a grave, that was his report, and that was all that we could get out of him. We told him to lead the way, and followed. He kept slightly to the left of the line CT, and brought us to a spot about a hundred yards north of the point where Willis had planted a lance. Here we stood around what corresponded very closely to the Mameluke's description. The top, about six feet long, was raised nearly two feet above the level of the ground, to which it sloped at the sides and ends. It was covered, like the plain all around with tall prairie grass, which hid it from view, and, without the aid of the sharp eyes of the Mameluke, we might have searched for a long time without discovering it. Willis acknowledged that his calculations had been erroneous, but "if you want a proof," he said, "that this is the place, look! there are the yokes of the bullocks," pointing to a heap of logs of wood lying in the grass.

"Well, let us to work at once," said Rayne, "I will go and call the men, with spades for us all."

The spades had been brought from England at the bottom of Willis's trunk, and had caused him considerable anxiety at the Custom-house at Asuncion, for, had they been discovered, their presence would naturally have raised suspicion. They were of a peculiar form, and adapted for military purposes; the handles were removable, which facilitated their being packed, and they could by a simple adjustment be converted into picks.

We waited patiently, but soon we saw Rayne returning, accompanied by Alice; and then Estanislado, Carancho, and our drivers came running down, spades and machètes in hand, and all in a great state of excitement. With the machètes we soon cleared away the long grass from off, and around the mound, and then, by mutual agreement, we invited Alice to cut the first sod. She blushed, but at once acceded to our request, and with Charley's assistance, a square piece of turf was cut out of the top, and thrown on one side. Then with a will we set to work; every man seized a spade and drove it home, and the earth was soon flying about on all sides. The tropical sun was shining down upon us at the hottest hour of the day, but we took no notice of it; the heat was terrific, and now and then a man would stop a second to wipe off the perspiration, and again set to work. There was no general pause until Charley suddenly struck oil, that is to say, he shouted out, "The doors! this is timber!" On that announcement the majority of

us ceased to work until he had verified the fact, and in a short time he had cleared away a space, and exposed to view the flat boards. Then, with the exception of two men, who continued the operation of removing the loose earth from the top of the boards, we all sat down, gazing intently on the light covering that still remained, between the treasure and its discoverers. For my part, I was thinking that here, at least, the ambition of my life was about to be realized; that after endless attempts, and as many failures, at length my persistence was to be rewarded; but with these thoughts came the remembrance of the party who, years passed, had worked on this same spot; of the detachment of a beaten and fugitive army; the last remnant of a nation fighting for existence; that had done the work which we were just undoing—had hidden a treasure that we were laying open to the heavens; and that had perished, every man of it, officers and soldiers, to prevent the betrayal of a secret, which was now one no longer.

The work was done, the cart-doors were uncovered and we had only to lift them up, and there, without question, we should find the treasure of Paraguay; but the men seemed to hesitate, they drew back, and stood looking at the opening, leaning in silence on their spades. It was Willis who, speaking to Carancho, said, "Take one of those picks, and raise the boards."

"Yes, patrón, but can you tell us what is below?"

Perhaps there are the bodies of some unhappy beings (cuérpos de algúnos póbres).

Cuérpos de póbres! Did we come here to look for old bones? Why, man alive, beneath those boards there is money to buy you a herd of cattle. Vamos! there is no time to lose."

Satisfied with this explanation, Estanislado and Carancho jumped into the hole, and, with their picks, easily lifted up the boards, and handed them to the men who were standing above.

Untouched, and but little changed by age, there were displayed the contents of the carts, exactly as they had been deposited. On the northern side was a large case that occupied one half of the excavation, and placed crossways to it were two other boxes, one above the other; the remaining space was occupied by the fourth box, on the top of which was the *tercio*. A *tercio*, or *sobornál*, as the smaller sort is called, consists of a piece of wet ox-hide, doubled and stitched up two sides, the top being left open. Into this the yerba-maté is put, and, when filled, the top is also closed. As the hide dries it contracts, and presses the yerba into a hard compact mass, bulging out in the middle, and having very much the appearance of an inflated air-cushion.

We stood in perfect silence; no one seemed inclined to speak or to move. There was the treasure, for which we had travelled thousands of miles, lying at our feet, and yet everyone was diffident about

clutching it. At length Willis stepped down on to the big case, and, leaning over the tercio, he said "This is falling to pieces: get a cloth or a poncho to put under it."

We had been so interested in our discovery, that we had not noticed the arrival of an addition to our party. Her voice announced to us all that Doña Ramóna had joined us.

"Touch it at your peril," she said. "It is mine, absolutely mine, until I deliver it to the rightful owners. Here is my power; and you, Don Felix, will not dare to dispute that this is the seal of the Supreme Government, and that these are the signatures of the Ministers. See, there is the *rubrica* of the President. Take it and read for yourself."

But Willis declined, and merely waived it away with his hand.

"You will not; then you will regret your refusal. Do you know that your very lives are in my hands? You and that other deserter (pointing to Pepe) and these English bandits (turning to us) will be prisoners in the hands of Ramirez and his troopers, before the sun has set. Last night I sent to summon him, and probably he is close by, watching me at this very moment, and waiting for my signal."

Alice made a slight diversion. She had come to the señora's side, and now she put an arm around her, and leaning her graceful head on Doña Ramóna's shoulder, she whispered some words to calm and

soothe her, but, evidently they failed in the desired effect, for again she broke out,

“*Madre! Madre túya!*” she said disdainfully; “you know I am not your mother. Don’t touch me, *ingráta! renegáda! apostáta!* Go, go to your heretic lover!” and she pushed away the girl, who was weeping, and clinging to her, with a violence that, in one second, induced Rayne to place himself at her side.

The scene was so painful that more than once we had tried to interpose, but it was impossible to stop the señora’s torrent of words. Happily another incident occurred. I had noticed a smile on Carancho’s face when Doña Ramóna spoke of having sent to summon Ramirez; and now his proceedings again attracted my attention. He was standing in front of me, and, evidently, making signals to some one at my back. I turned round, and at once understood the cause of his singular conduct. Standing in the doorway of the cart, in which they had been lodged, were the two young Paraguayan damsels, their white dresses being very prominent in the full sunshine. Weary of captivity, and yearning to know the cause of our meeting in the open plain, they had allowed their curiosity to overcome their prudence, and had climbed on to the cart to see what we were doing. Just as I turned, so did Doña Ramóna, and she at once caught sight of the two white figures. “Who are these women?” she inquired, and Willis replied, “Felicia and

Inez. We prevented them from leaving us last night."

Then the strong woman, who, a few minutes before had braved and threatened us all, completely broke down. "Deceived by everyone!" I heard her mutter, and drawing her veil close around her face, she burst into tears, and walked hurriedly away. Alice, with a woman's sympathy for another in distress, hastened after her, and we stood there for some minutes looking somewhat sheepish and ashamed, rather than proud, at the result of our counter-plot. It was certainly hard that all her well laid plans had been frustrated ; that Alice, if not a deserter from her side, was, at least, an ally of her opponents ; and that the treasure had been brought to light, but Ramirez was not forthcoming to capture it,

There was, however, no time to lose. Willis gave some orders to the cart-men, who at once ran off to the camp, while we lifted out the old *tercio*, and then the three smaller boxes. They were heavy enough, and each of them required two men to raise it ; and as to the largest, we found that it was impossible to haul on it without ropes, and, therefore, waited until the cart, for which Willis had sent, should arrive. Meanwhile we turned our attention to the contents of the old *tercio*, spread out upon a poncho stretched on the ground. The slight shaking caused by moving it seemed to break it up, and when we touched the hide it regularly crumbled away.

The appearance of our find did not at first, lead us to conclude, that it could be of any great value. All the articles were of one and the same dull leaden hue. I took up a piece of money supposing it to be a silver dollar, but found, on rubbing it, that it was a gold onza, a coin worth upwards of three pounds sterling; and another, that looked like a quarter-dollar, turned out to be a Brazilian ten mil-reis, similar in value to a sovereign. It was, as Valentin had said, a perfect medley. There were numbers of the large combs of tortoise-shell, with which, at one period, women of all classes adorned their hair, although at the present time their use has been nearly discarded by the "upper ten,"—every one of them ornamented with a band of gold, and, in many instances, with precious stones. Rings there were in abundance, some highly finished, and others roughly made, but all of gold, and many of them set with stones; bracelets, armlets, necklets could be counted by scores; and loose stones, fallen from the strings that had held them together, but that had decayed with age, were lying at the bottom mixed up with disjointed puzzle rings, and bits of broken gold. We heard afterwards from Doña Ramóna, who recognized many of the articles of jewellery, and had known their owners, that this collection had been the result of the very last requisition of Lopez, and had proved the most valuable of all.

People had held back from parting with the last

heir-loom, some priceless jewel, or unique ornament, as long as they could avoid it, but the time came when they had no home or resting place in which to hide their property, and at length it had to be surrendered, on the demand of the Dictator.

We ourselves noticed that in the contents of the old *tercio*, there was not one piece of any baser metal than gold, and it seemed as though silver had been discarded, as being too cumbersome a load.

The cart had been brought up by this time. We got the long strips of hide, used for lashing the bullocks to the yokes, and passing them under the heavy box, at length dragged it out of the hole, and were about to put it into the cart which had been tilted up for the purpose, when Rayne proposed that we should examine its contents at once, instead of having to unload it again.

Willis expostulated ; he said :

"What is the good of opening it, we cannot carry it in any way better than it is ?"

"I don't want to empty it," replied Rayne ; "but it is as well to see whether it is worth carrying."

It was a well-made box of cedar, tightly screwed down, and secured with iron hoops. It took some time to open, but at length the men raised one side of the lid sufficiently to allow of the admission of our hands. The first article produced was a heavy silver candlestick, rolled neatly in a piece of cotton, then came a dish of the same metal, and then another

similarly wrapped, but the coverings of all were rapidly decaying.

"That is evidently the plate chest," said Charley, "and I don't think we need examine any further. Now let us open the other cases just to satisfy our curiosity."

They were opened, the top layer consisted of gold onzas in *rouleaux* of fifty pieces each, but the paper in which they had been enrolled had almost disappeared; corners and interstices, which did not allow of the admission of a *rouleau* of onzas, had been filled in with sovereigns, and Brazilian gold pieces of smaller size, which occupied less space. The second stratum in all the boxes was the same, and beyond that, we did not penetrate. The lids were all closed again, and the boxes were safely packed in the light cart, that we had brought up the river.

In leisure moments, I have more than once taken up a pencil, and jotted down on paper the value of the treasure that we recovered from the Llano de Chiriguele. Assuming that the largest box only contained silver, and that the layers in the smaller ones were throughout similar to those which we examined, viz., of gold pieces, and placing the price of both metals at a low figure, I find that the total value of the contents of the four boxes would be upwards of two million and a quarter pounds sterling. This value would naturally be increased if any of the boxes contained precious

stones, but I do not think that this was the case to any great extent, for, as already stated, the people had kept to the last moment their most valuable jewellery, and this was found in the old *tercio*. Three-fifths of the contents of this *tercio*, when sold in Europe, realized upwards of £18,000, and the total of £30,000 would fairly represent the value of the settings of ornaments in a country, which is only to a small extent, productive of the precious metals, and of gems. This estimate compares very favourably with Willis's statement, that five millions of dollars were voted to the Dictator on the breaking out of war, and that he had added to his store by forced levies, the value of which had been placed at fifteen to twenty millions of dollars, but which was never really ascertained, and was probably greatly exaggerated.

A thorough search at the bottom of the cavity brought to light some few more articles, which had not been recovered and put into the *tercio*, when the box broke, and then our work was done, and we began our walk back to the camp. Willis did not accompany us; without a word he started off in the direction in which he could see Doña Ramóna and Alice, pacing backwards and forwards, under the trees. We saw him join them, and then Alice left, and came towards us, and together we walked back to the carts.

We spread before her the poncho, covered with the

treasures of Paraguay, as in Eastern climes costly gifts are laid at the feet of a princess. Our princess was, after all, but a woman, though a very lovely one. Her eyes sparkled with joy; from her lips issued exclamations of surprise and wonder; and with her dainty fingers she selected perhaps the most beautiful object of the whole collection, an antique crucifix of gold. But she could not fully enjoy the sight alone, she wanted others to participate in her pleasure, and, turning to Rayne, she said, "Oh, where is mamma? Oh, Charley! call Francisca and the girls." They soon surrounded her, with many expressions of wonder in the soft Guarani language, the chief of which were "Atái! atái! wonderful! wonderful!" sometimes prolonged to "Atái cónderobá! Oh, how beautiful!"

Then a common idea seemed to strike them all. They disappeared for a minute, and when they returned, armed with handkerchiefs and bits of cloth, they calmly sat down in a circle, to clean and polish up.

Charley was declared by Alice to be a nuisance, and was told many times to go away; he was not content with placing combs and pins in her luxuriant hair, but every now and then he wanted a hand, to see the effect of a ring on a finger, or of a bracelet on her arm. This certainly hindered the cleaning operations, but he kept his position, and, when I left them, Alice was loaded with bangles and rings, like

an Indian bride. In this situation the party was discovered by Willis and Doña Ramóna, on their return from a long interview. The surprise of the señora on beholding the spread of jewels, was no less than that of Alice, and she saw them in a much better aspect, for many of them had become bright and brilliant from the polishing and cleaning they had undergone. But Doña Ramóna had an interest in them apart from their actual value. She had known many of their owners. "This belonged to Mercédes," she said; "that was a bridal gift to Terésa; I remember when Celestina wore that brooch for the first time, at the ball given at the President's house;" and so on, naming people who had been the companions of her youth, and whom she had known in her maturer years, but when asked what had become of them, the sad reply was almost invariably the same, that they had perished during some period of that long and terrible war.

Willis summoned a council. He told me that there were matters of importance to be settled, and that Rayne must be called away from the side of his *fiancée*, to attend to business of a graver, but less pleasant nature.

"Well, Willis," he said, when we had assembled "you have had a long conversation with Doña Ramóna. I hope that the result is satisfactory."

"You and Penstone," he replied, "must form your own opinion about that when I have told you what

has occurred. Briefly, it is this: first, I made a strong attack upon her; secondly, I appealed to her common-sense, of which she possesses more than an average share; and, thirdly, I held out a bait, and, I believe, landed her. The attack was in this wise: you know that before you and our own peons she has called me a deserter, and this was not the first occasion on which she has done so. I rejoined by recounting to her the story of the execution of the working party as I had heard it, and have repeated it to you. But I did not at first mention the name of the leader. I pointed out that I had only left the service of the Dictator when, by a crime, he had broken every tie that could bind a soldier to his chief. I did my best to shatter her idol, and I succeeded in shaking her faith.

“Some rumours of that ghastly incident have long been current in Paraguay, but the true history has never been divulged, and is known to very few.

“My story could not be pooh-poohed. I gave her the names of many of the victims; I stated time and place; and at length I told her who had commanded the working party, and how he had died in my arms. In Paraguay everyone knows everyone. But Valentin was no casual acquaintance of Doña Ramóna; she had nursed him in her arms; she had known his young wife; and she had followed his career until he had disappeared, and no one knew how.

“The woman is not without feeling, and she was

cute enough to know that my story was true. She admitted that I was justified in my treatment of El Supremo, and in my animosity to all his relatives, of whom she claims to be one.

"I have said that, secondly, I appealed to her feelings; but that is a misnomer, it was to her interests that I appealed. I pointed out that the general power from all Lopez's descendants which she flaunted in our face, although confirmed by the authorities, would prove absolutely valueless; that no licence has been granted to us, or to her, as the law of the land demands, to search for the treasure; and that the Government would simply put forward its right and claim it, should it ever come within their reach. But would it ever come within their reach? 'Ramirez may be honest, and his troopers may be honest; but has ever a temptation such as this been put before them, or any other Paraguayans? We have discovered to-day,' I said, 'not hundreds of thousands of dollars, but an incalculable wealth in condors of Chili, doubloons from Mexico, 20 milreis pieces of Brazil, and sovereigns from England, besides gold and silver ornaments and precious stones. Are you going to deliver all this to a party of rough soldiers, to dispose of as they like, to waste it in gambling and debauchery, or, if they are supremely honest, to hand it over to the authorities, who will not even give you thanks?

"'But listen to the other side,' I went on, 'and this is

my third point. We do not say that the treasure that we have discovered is absolutely ours ; but we do say that we will not deliver it to Ramírez and his troopers, or to any authority, civil or military, until all claims to the property have been clearly defined. Here, in Paraguay, we have reason to believe, and you, yourself, with the document that you have in your hand, confirm our supposition, that the treasure will be at once seized, and, therefore, we do not intend to run the risk. Unless prevented by superior force, we shall carry it out of the country by routes that are little known, and but seldom traversed, and in Buenos Ayres, if you like, we will discuss your claims, and justice shall be done. The greater part of the wealth of which I have spoken is contained in cases, which we shall carry down intact ; but there is a lot of jewellery, of some value, which we found loose, and which, we think, we shall be justified in taking as our reward for the long journey we have made, and the expense that we have incurred. There are five persons, I continued—and this was the bait—who, in the opinion of Captain Rayne, Don Arturo, and myself, are entitled to a share in the distribution of the property that I have just mentioned. These are the adventurers—the persons who have incurred the risk, the danger, and the expense, in the hope of ultimately making a profit ; the peóns drivers, and servants do not come into the category, they are paid by agreement for their services. But

there are ourselves, who came from England purposely to look for this treasure; yourself, who have watched our progress ever since we arrived in the country; and Miss Granton, who has shared in all our toils and hardships. So now,' I concluded, 'you must, Doña Ramóna, make your choice. On the one hand, you may bring down upon us, if you can, Ramirez and his thirty or forty troopers, and we shall meet them with our repeating rifles; whoever wins, you will be the loser; we will give you nothing, and, as I have told you, you will get nothing from them. On the other hand, our success shall be your success, one fifth part of whatever may be realized shall be yours.'

"'And Dolores?' she said.

"'Dolores, or Miss Granton, is no part of the compact,' I replied; 'she had not entered into our scheme when we planned our venture.'

"'But shall I get the reward for finding her?' she inquired.

"'For an answer to that question I must refer you to Mr. Penistone and Captain Rayne. The question that I must have decided at once is, whether I must put a guard on your people, or whether you will agree to abide with us, and refrain from calling up Ramirez and his men?'

"'I *will* send a message to Ramirez,' she said, 'but it shall be for the purpose of delaying him, and preventing his following us, and you shall choose

the messenger, one of your own people, if you like.'

"That," said Willis, "is my case. I have dealt with two-fifths of the property that we can now divide, and I have promised two-fifths of all that we may realize hereafter, and all this I have done on my own authority, but I appeal to you, Penistone, and I do not think that you will grudge a share in our find to Miss Alice."

I did not answer, but Charley started up.

"Thanks, Willis! I should have been well satisfied if I had never discovered any other treasure, as you once called her, than Alice, but I accept willingly her dowry from you, and shall never forget the old companions who bestowed it. But I have to thank you for something more. My conscience pricked me at the idea of taking Alice away from her adopted mother, but you have shown me that that lady has other and preferential interests, and now I can act with perfect freedom."

"That is fortunate," said Willis, "and I hope that you can induce Miss Granton to see matters in the same light. We have not seen the last of Ramirez; sooner or later he will follow us, and we must try and put him off the track of our treasure-cart. We must make for the Alto Paraná, for to return by the route by which we came, is to sacrifice everything that we have won. Let us divide into two parties; with the cart, I will cross the Sierra de Amanbay at the first

pass that I can find, and on the other side I shall be out of Paraguayan territory, and at liberty to defend our property. Doña Ramóna will not leave the treasure, I am convinced, and so let her accompany me; but the road is too rough, and the hardships too great, for Miss Alice, and you and Penistone must travel by the road to Panadero, and thence to Yguatemy. From there, there is an old road, as I am told, in good condition, which crosses the sierra, and brings you out on the Paraná, near to the Salto de Guayra, or, if not hindered *en route*, you can make your way through Paraguay to Candelaria, and at that place I shall try and meet you. The boxes we cannot divide, their contents are too heavy for a march on horseback; but to-night we must give Doña Ramóna her share of the contents of the tercio, and we must reward our people and hers, and the remainder you must take with you. You may have trouble with Ramirez, for he will undoubtedly follow the track of the carts, and that I intend shall be made by your party."

The plan that Willis proposed was discussed at length; every pro and con was fully considered, and Charley and I raised many objections, that could not be fully overcome by him. At length we agreed to a separation that appeared unavoidable, and at once prepared to carry it into effect.

Doña Ramóna and Alice were appointed assessors, and divided what we called our loose treasure, into

five portions ; one of these was selected and quickly gathered up by the señora, and from the other four we liberally rewarded the men, who had accompanied us so long, and so willingly ; Felicia and Inez had presents that would at least prevent them going as penniless brides to Carancho and Pepe, on whom they had centred their affections ; and Charley's gift to Francisca was a proof, that he had not forgotten her care and kindness, during his illness at the Estancia Observacion.

When our plan was explained to Doña Ramóna, she was pleased to express her approval, but she stipulated, as Willis had imagined she would, that she should not be separated from the treasure-cart. We pointed out the difficult, and perhaps dangerous journey that she would have to make, but she said that she was accustomed to long journeys, and could never meet with greater hardships than those, that she had suffered during the war. The separation from Alice she did not seem to take greatly to heart, and merely said that it would be only temporary.

With Alice, Charley had much greater difficulty. Although her trust and confidence in Doña Ramóna had suffered a rude shock, still she could not but remember the long years that they had lived together, as mother and daughter, and the love and affection that she felt for the señora, and that she believed had been returned. The separation was to be only for a short time, according to Charley, but Alice knew

that it was the first step towards a final severance of all those ties that had bound her to Paraguay, and to her adopted mother. She was in the position of a young girl leaving her home for the first time, but she was not exchanging it, as a bride, for a new one ; she was going away to a strange land, with two gentlemen, for one of whom, it is true, she had a very strong leaning, but still she had only known them for a short time.

Charley succeeded at last in overcoming her scruples, but on condition that Francisca, the woman who had nursed and tended her, from her earliest childhood, should accompany her. This was easily arranged, and in fact had formed part of our proposal ; and, in addition to her nurse, it was found that she was to have another female attendant, for Felicia had consented to part from her friend Inez, and to travel southwards with Carancho, while Inez was to remain with her mistress, and one might add, with Pepe, who naturally accompanied his master.

And so our general plan of operations was settled, but there were still a good many details to be arranged. It was all very well for Willis to say that he would cross the sierra, and seek the Alto Paraná, but what did we know of this river, and of the dangers that he might have to encounter ? From all that I had read, and from the information that we had picked up in Paraguay itself, the navigation of the Alto Paraná would appear to be one of the most difficult

undertakings to be imagined. The mass of waters that it contains, is said to exceed that of all European rivers taken collectively, but their course is constantly impeded by almost insurmountable obstacles. In one place they flow over a spur of the Sierra of Amanbay, and form the series of rapids of Guayra, which are among the most remarkable in the world.

And rapids are not the only dangers, for in the old days of the Jesuits, Fray Anthony Ruiz affirmed, that he had seen a fish as big as an ox, swimming with half its body above water, and that there was a tradition among the Indians that one of these enormous creatures had swallowed a man, and thrown him out whole upon the shore. And in more modern times an explorer relates that, at thirty miles from the Falls of Guayra, a noise is heard like thunder; that settlements had to be abandoned because the inhabitants became deaf; and that the whole region is in the hands of the wildest class of savages.

Were Willis, Doña Ramóna, and their attendants to run the risk of being lost in the rapids, swallowed by cow-like fish, deafened by the thunder of the waters, or captured by the savages?

Rayne and I had agreed to the idea of a separation, but we were determined to know something more about the route that Willis proposed to take, and so we at once sent for the Mameluke, who, we supposed, being a native of the districts bordering on the Paraná, might know something about its navigation.

Willis acted as interpreter, and through him we learned that the Mameluke had been to the "Siete Caidas," as he called them, for he did not seem to know anything about Guayra; and had even been lower down the river, for he said that he had seen the *peña pobre*. When asked about the *peña pobre*, and what it was, he informed us that it was a "rock of gold." It seemed somewhat curious to apply the two names, a *poor rock* and a *golden rock* to the same object, and on further inquiry we discovered that it does not consist of the valuable metal, but that the surface is so bright, and of so many different colours, that the sunbeams, striking on it, are reflected, as it were, from gold.*

But apart from the legends, we got from the Mameluke some valuable information. He told us that he knew a road across the sierra, and that he could bring us to the Amanbay, a navigable river flowing into the Paraná, that the Indians were wild, but that they were friendly to him, and that they had canoes, and would carry the party within a few leagues of the Siete Caidas, or Seven Falls of Guayra. But beyond that point they would not go, on account of the wicked spirits at the Rapids. For himself he did not fear them, and there would be no difficulty in reaching the very Falls in one or two canoes, under his guidance and that of Pepe.

* The "Provincial" Fray Nicholas Durant states that the Rock is of "meer" stone, so rubbed and polished with sand of different colours, driven by the winds, that at a distance it looks like glass. Query: Is this the word "meer" that we have in "meerschau?"

"And at the Falls, what then?" we asked.

"There are seven long steps," he explained, "covering a length of twelve leagues, over which the water rushes, throwing up one continual foam of iron-colour, which is reflected by the sun, and dazzles the eyes of all who behold it, and at the foot of the last step or precipice, there is a large standing pool of apparently calm water. But watch it," he went on;—"at stated times, nearly at every hour, there rises a great roar from the bottom, and a column of water, many feet in height, is thrown into the air."

But this, as he explained, had nothing to do with a party travelling southwards. Beyond the *Isla del Salto Guayra* no boat could live on the river, and they must leave their canoes at the Rapids, and journey by land until calmer waters were again reached. He told us, in reply to further questions, that at Cuidad Réal we could get peóns and carts to carry the boxes; and that once beyond the area of the Rapids, there would be no difficulty in reaching Itapúa in canoes.

After the Indian had left us, we again discussed the whole subject. He had certainly put a more hopeful light on Willis's proposed undertaking than we had expected. He had told us that he knew the road, and that the Indians whom he might meet were friendly to him; and we had no reason to question his truthfulness. If he could only find his way to the

Falls then most of the difficulties would vanish ; for Willis did not fear the cow-like fish, nor would he remain long enough in the neighbourhood of the Rapids to contract deafness, through the thunder of the waters.

Ultimately we agreed to the divergence of our routes, as proposed by Willis ; but before we turned in for the night all the facts were submitted to Doña Ramóna, and that lady reiterated her earlier assertion, that she had no dread of the hardships, that might have to be encountered.

Early morning saw our treasure-cart ready for the march : four bullocks in harness and four in reserve. Of all our party the only one who seemed to be in a high state of contentment, was the Mameluke. He repeatedly told me that he was going to return to his *familia*, and appeared perfectly happy. The rest of us were undoubtedly "down in the mouth." Willis was not a sympathetic character, but we had learned to understand his ways. We had got accustomed to his reserved and somewhat brusque manner ; and we could appreciate his sound common-sense. Charley and I felt that our success was chiefly due to his intelligence and foresight, and we parted from him with very much regret.

Alice suffered acutely when the time came to separate from Doña Ramóna, but that lady was wonderfully calm and self-possessed. As for Francisca, Inez and Felicia, they, undoubtedly, felt

parting, but they made but little display of their feelings.

We followed the cart for a considerable distance, carefully obliterating all marks of its track, and then returned to prepare for our own journey.*

* In addition to enormous water-snakes and serpents, regarding which there are many legends and traditions, it would seem probable that Paraguayan rivers are tenanted by some monsters greatly to be dreaded. A member of the Colony of Itapé, to which reference has been previously made, was found on the banks of the River Tebicuari, lying on his face, and with his head pointing to the water. He had been bathing, and was in a state of nudity, but the flesh of his back had been torn *upwards*, from the loins to the shoulders. The English medical attendant of the Colony gave his decided opinion, that the wounds had been inflicted by some creature that had emerged from the water, and had attacked the unfortunate man when seated on the shore. Such wounds, he added, could *not* have been inflicted by a tiger, nor by any beast of prey approaching from the land side. The sufferer survived for some hours, but the shock had deprived him of all powers of speech, and the mystery surrounding his death has remained unsolved.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOME.

I HAD written frequently to Joseph Kearsney so long as we were within a postal district, but, naturally, when we left Observacion, and got into the wilds, correspondence became very difficult. I remember, however, writing one letter, after matters had come to a climax, between Doña Ramóna and Alice, in which I enclosed another to Mr. Granton, telling him that in Dolores Susini, I had discovered his long-lost niece, Alice. To whom that letter was intrusted I cannot say, but most probably I handed it to the señora, in the hope that by some medium, unknown to me, it might reach its destination. And so it did; and when Granton learned that his niece was found, and that there was a prospective husband in addition, he at once went to consult his old friend Kearsney. Kearsney, although he had never met my chum, knew all about Charley, and advised Mr. Granton to see Mrs. Rayne. This he did, and not only satisfied himself that her son was in a position to marry, but also took a great liking to that lady, who had already

heard of her boy's improved health, and was anxiously expecting his return home.

From that moment Mr. Granton had but one idea, namely, to go and meet Alice at some point at which she would have, of necessity, to touch on her way home, and that idea he at once broached to Kearsney.

My relative was not at all opposed to another sea voyage, and Granton found a strong advocate in Grace, who urged, with all her feminine diplomacy, the proposed journey.

So it was arranged; and the two old bachelors escorted Grace to Buenos Ayres. There we arrived shortly afterwards; and I fulfilled my promise to Grace, and recounted to her, first of all, the history of the discovery of the treasure, and showed her the samples that we had brought with us.

From the time that we left Willis our journey had been long but comparatively easy, and without any remarkable features. As he had warned us would be the case, so it turned out. Ramirez, with his troopers, waiting in vain for a message from Doña Ramóna, at length lost patience, and started in pursuit of our party. They followed the cart track, as we supposed they would do, and caught us up at Ygatimy, the first village that we had entered, since leaving Observacion. Here we rested for a day or two, with a roof over our heads, and here also we determined to leave Doña Ramóna's cart, for which we had no further necessity:

Major Ramirez was inclined to be very rough, and gave us a fair sample of what would have occurred, had we brought the treasure-boxes with us. There would have been no question as to the rights of ownership, they would have been simply looted. As it was, the troopers surrounded the carts, and tossed everything about, and on our going out to expostulate, they entered the room that we occupied, and searched our property there. Fortunately, we were in time to prevent their entering Alice's apartment, in which we had placed the valise that contained our share in the contents of the old *tercio*, but Ramirez only desisted on our threatening to prevent his intrusion by force. Charley, with his Mannlicher, would have made his mark among them, but still, an appeal to arms was not desirable, and both parties wished to avoid it. Ramirez wanted the treasure, but he saw that we had nothing of any bulk with us, and was wise enough to understand that by killing us, he would lose any information that we might be able to give. So we came to a parley.

"Where is your other cart?" he asked.

"It separated from us on the Plains of Chiriguele," we replied.

"Where is Don Felix?"

"With the cart."

"And where is he going?"

"To Brazil," was our answer, and beyond that we would not go. But he got at our cartmen, and from

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one of them, either by threats or promises, he managed to obtain some information as to the route that Willis would probably take, and in accordance with it, he made his plans.

After a stay of a few hours, during which he had been resting the horses, his trumpet sounded, the men mounted, and the troop marched back by the same route that it had come.

From this point to reach Guaira, and meet Willis on the Paraná, we should have struck off in an easterly direction, but as we had no cause to fear further annoyance from Ramirez, there seemed no reason why we should not proceed in a southerly direction, and come upon the river much lower down. By joining Willis we should increase his impedimenta, and add greatly to the length of our journey. In fact, to save Alice many hardships, we thought at one time of making for Villa Rica and Paraguairí, and thence on to Asuncion by railway, but we should certainly have had to undergo considerable annoyance from the authorities, who would probably have received some news about our movements, and who would undoubtedly expropriate the contents of our valise; and so we decided to go direct to Candelaria, which had been fixed as our ultimate place of meeting. The country through which we passed is excessively rich and fertile, and well adapted for agriculture, and especially for growing tobacco. We traversed the western side of the Cordillera of Caaguazú, a con-

tinuation of the mountainous range of Amanbay or Maracayú, until we crossed it to enter the little town of San Joaquin. This, like almost all the villages through which we passed, has been rebuilt on the old Jesuit settlement, or established in its immediate neighbourhood. And I can imagine no better guides in the selection of profitable lands, than the Jesuit Fathers. They knew where to place a settlement, and they also knew how to turn it to good account. In the forms of religion they were very strict. The *Ave Maria*, the *Credo*, the *Paternoster* were translated into Guarani, and, morning and evening, were repeated by the natives, in parrot-like fashion. But in the intervals between prayers the good Fathers knew how to make the *faithful* work, and, as they themselves tell us, they used the old-fashioned method of correction, but applied a scourge, instead of a birch, to the idle and unruly members of their flocks.

At no distant date the railway, as was at first intended, will be prolonged from its present terminus at Paraguari to Villa Rica, the centre of a fine tobacco-growing country, and thence, southwards, through the old Jesuit settlements, to the banks of the Paraná until a connection be made with the Argentine Railways, that are seeking northern routes.

At length we reached the banks of the Alto Paraná, close to Itapúa or Encarnacion, and nearly opposite to Candelaria, from which it is separated by the river, half a mile in breadth. This we crossed in canoes,

and then found ourselves on Argentine soil, in the Department of Misiones.

Candelaria was the seat of Government of the second Jesuit settlements. The first was higher up the Paraná, but was completely destroyed by the Indians and Brazilian Mamelukes. The ruins which abound show that it was a place of some importance, and that the houses were well built. One of them, the college, is still in good repair, and is inhabited by the Commandant; and portions of the church in the middle of the plaza prove that the Guaranis were not only good masons, but that they also cultivated the art of sculpture. The country round is very beautiful, palm trees abounding, and we had some very good shooting during our stay. We had never had the luck to come across a *mborebi* or tapir, in its wild state, but here we found a fine large domesticated specimen. He had been brought as a baby from the far north, and was now employed in drawing a small cart, laden with bricks. It is said that they are rapidly disappearing.

Our stay was prolonged for some time. We knew that Willis's journey was more difficult than ours, and would take a longer time, but we waited for ten days, and no tidings reached us of any sort. Then we dispatched a *chasqui*, or messenger, up to Guayra, and at the end of another ten days he returned.

The story he had to tell was by no means clear, but

it caused us great anxiety. It was reported that a party from up country had reached the Isla del Salto Grande, but that several of them had been drowned, and that the remainder had crossed to the right bank of the river, that is to say, had returned to the Paraguayan side. Notwithstanding a severe cross-questioning, this was all that our envoy could tell us, and we were left in doubt whether Willis was among the survivors, or had perished on the river. Alice was so greatly distressed at the thought of Doña Ramóna being among those lost, that we determined to try and get further tidings, and selected another messenger, strongly recommended as being a genius, and at once dispatched him. He was somewhat more successful; he had talked to an Indian who had seen the party cross the river from the Brazilian to the Paraguayan side, and had counted five people, two of whom, he could see by their dress, were women. This satisfied Alice that Doña Ramóna and Inez were safe, but it left one man unaccounted for, and there still remained the doubt whether that one, was Willis.

We could, however, do nothing, and it was useless our remaining longer at Candelaria. We left a letter, and a sum of money, with the Commandant, in the hope that Willis might turn up, and, if not, the money was to be given to the poor, after a specified time should have elapsed, and then we said farewell, and started by road and canoe down the river. At Apipi

we got the little steamer that plies to Corrientes, and there we fortunately met a Brazilian packet bound to Buenos Ayres. Before going on board we wrote to friends at Asuncion, asking them to let us know if Willis was there, and to tell him of our proceedings.

At Buenos Ayres, as I have already said, we were met by unexpected friends, Mr. Granton, my cousin Kearsney, and Grace. Every one of the twenty-four days that I passed in that great city, deserves to be marked with chalk, as forming a most pleasing episode in my life.

The return to civilization, to the creature comforts that a good hotel afforded, fat living and soft beds, rest, quietude, and charming society, all served to render life happy, and were the more appreciated, because we had been so long without them.

Grace seemed more beautiful than ever; I had carried with me to Paraguay fond remembrances of our first meeting, and during our wanderings she had been constantly present to my mind. Oftentimes as I have watched Alice, riding her alazán through the woods, chatting gaily with Charley, or seated amongst us at the camp fireside, taking Carancho's guitar and singing a plaintive Spanish ballad, or a lively Habanera, I had wished that she and Grace might, some day be brought together.

And here they were. At first, Alice was a little timid; she was rather frightened of the polished English lady, but that soon wore off; the *belle sauvage*,

as Kearsney had called her, when they were on their way to meet her, was innately refined, and Kearsney soon became her most devoted servant. The girls were almost inseparable, and Charley complained that, with Grace on the one side, and Mr. Granton on the other, he hardly ever had Alice to himself for a moment.

Mr. Granton was delighted. In his thanks to me he was effusive, and he welcomed Charley most kindly, and had a long interview with him, the result of which appeared satisfactory to both parties. Alice took to him at once. I think that she had considered herself in a somewhat false position, travelling down country with her affianced husband, and without any relative, or even a female in attendance, excepting the servants; and she was glad to cling to the handsome, middle-aged country gentleman, and to feel that she belonged to him, before she was given away to Charley. That she was to be given away, and that quickly, was already decided, and there was no reason to prevent their becoming husband and wife.

Their first meeting had only taken place a few months ago, but since then they had had more opportunities for studying one another's character, than many people in civilized society, who have been engaged for years. The want of comforts, the heat, cold, and rain, and the many petty annoyances that are attendant on the wild life that we had been passing, were all endured by her, not only without a murmur,

but amiably and graciously ; and for his part, he had done all in his power to ameliorate the situation ; had cared for, and tended her, and by his happy temperament, his presence of mind, and his skill in all sorts of sport, had proved that he was a man to whom she might look up, and in whom she might put her trust. So they were to be bound in marriage, so soon as certain formalities should be complied with.

The only opposition came from the priest of the parish in which we were residing, who considered it a heinous offence for a member of the Catholic Apostolic Church, to give herself to a héretic. But by a little careful management, even this difficulty was overcome, and the obstacle to their union, on religious grounds, was removed.

Mrs. Rayne was informed, by cable, of what was about to take place, and wired back her blessing and good wishes.

If legal and church ceremonies can bind two people tightly together, then certainly Charles Rayne and Alice Granton are closely tied. There were certain formalities at the British Consulate ; a marriage at the English Church, and a second in that of Santo Domingo, where the regimental colours, captured from an English army, drooped, tattered and torn, over the heads of two bridal parties, for on that same evening, Carancho, still very ugly, but wonderfully got-up, took Felicia, that handsome Paraguayan lass, to wife, for better or worse.

Mr. Granton had never for one moment doubted the identity of Alice, with his brother's long lost daughter, and one of his first acts was to send instructions to Asuncion, to pay to Doña Ramóna, the large reward, that had remained unclaimed for years, in the Bank at Buenos Ayres.

Before we left the city, which we did three days after her marriage, Alice received a letter from Doña Ramóna herself. It was short, but written in a kindly and affectionate spirit. She thanked Mr. Granton, and said that she was now one of the richest widows in Paraguay. She sent her fondest love, and best wishes to Alice, and desired to be remembered to Charley and to me; but what perhaps interested us above all other points, was a casual reference to Willis. She hoped that he had rejoined us by this time, and wished to thank him for his kindness and courtesy during their long march. Then Willis after all was alive! and that fact added greatly to our happiness, as we took a last farewell of Buenos Ayres, and went on board the Royal Mail. Juncroft Library

I have some reason to suppose that had I asked Grace to be my wife, and to have been married to me at the English Church of Buenos Ayres, on the same day that Charley and Alice joined hands, my request might have been granted, but as usual, I hesitated until it was too late. During the voyage, however, one bright night as we steamed along under the Southern Cross, I found sufficient courage to make

my appeal, and shortly after our arrival in London, we were married.

This evening we are sitting in Grace's pretty drawing-room. Mrs. Rayne, looking the very happiest of mothers, is seated in the middle of a long sofa, with an arm round Alice, and a hand clasped in Charley's; and facing them are Mr. Granton and Kearsney, with my wife between them. They all seem pleased and happy, and every now and then there is a merry peal of laughter as Alice, in her soft, musical voice, and with a pretty foreign accent, recounts her impressions of an ice-bound pond, and her experiences of skating, which to-day she has seen for the first time.

I am just as pleased and happy, and am partly listening to what is going on, and partly thinking of other things. Memories crop up of a previous visit to this room; of the night on which Kearsney recommended me to stay at home, instead of wandering abroad in search of hidden treasures, and then rush through my mind incidents of our journey, and of the ultimate discovery of a mine of wealth. Now, on this very evening, we are to learn what has become of it. Not one word about it has reached us, since we bid good-bye to Willis on the plains of Chiriguele. He has written to us once, and that hurriedly, naming the vessel by which he was coming home, but his letter did not contain one syllable about the treasure. But to-night our curiosity is to be gratified, and our anxiety about it, if we have

any, which seems doubtful, will be allayed, for Willis arrived half-an-hour ago, and is engaged in a hasty toilet for dinner.

His history was reserved until we joined the ladies in the drawing-room, and there, seated round the fire, we listened to his recital.

"The Mameluke was invaluable," he said, "and, under his guidance, we struck the Amanbay, a tributary which joins the Alto Paraná on the north-western extremity of the Isla del Salto Guayra. When we found water deep enough to carry us, we made, under his instructions, a canoe, and in that we reached the great river, but the cart still accompanied us, for our boat was not sufficiently strong or large to carry its contents. But on the Paraná the Mameluke found Indians, whom he knew, and they supplied us with two capacious canoes, in exchange for our cart and cattle. In them we dropped slowly down the river, for we had not enough hands to keep up any continuous paddling, and the Indians, who have a superstition about the Seven Falls, could not be induced to accompany us, either for love or money.

"Our course was along the left bank, and we hugged the western side of the Island at the extremity of which we came upon a large open lake, at least a mile in breadth, surrounded by splendid timber. This we crossed, south of the Island, until we reached the main land. Already we could hear a noise, as of a mighty water-mill, constantly at

work, and the Mameluke told us that we were within two or three leagues of the dreaded Falls, and could not proceed much further in the canoes. That night we camped on the borders of the river, about a league above the point where it narrows into a canal, through which the water rushes with ever-increasing velocity, until the speed, as it approaches the cataract, is said to be at the rate of 40 miles an hour. Our plan was to disembark here, and to get carts or porters at the little village which, I was told, was to be found in the neighbourhood; on the site of the ruined Ciudad Real, a Jesuit mission that existed hundreds of years ago, and was destroyed by the Mamelukes.

"We moored our canoes in safety, and sought cover under the trees, at a little distance off, from a mizzling rain that drenched us, and that the Mameluke said, was the spray from the falling waters. I could not sleep, but at break of day, I was dozing, when Pepe's voice, 'Patrón, Patrón,' caused me to start up. I rushed to the riverside, and there, to my dismay, I found that both the canoes were loose, and floating down the current. In the leading boat, that containing the treasure, we could discern a man paddling, but Pepe assured me that he did not belong to our party. So I hurried back for a rifle, and on my return, I found that the boat was at least two hundred yards distant. I took aim and let fly; whether I hit him, I cannot say, but he suddenly dived overboard, paddle in hand, and made for the opposite shore.

Hardly had he disappeared from view, when a bullet whizzed past my head. From the 'pinge,' I knew that it came from a rifle, and I guessed at once that Ramirez had caught us up, and had sent us this salute from the Paraguayan side of the river.

"But the boats were gliding down the current, and I looked about for Pepe, and the others, to see whether anything could be done to save them. The men were running along the bank, crossing a promontory that jutted out, evidently in the hope of heading the canoes, and catching them at the bend of the river, a mile or so above the Falls. One man had separated himself from his companions, and made for the point itself. I followed in his steps, and when I reached the river's edge, I found him already in the water, swimming with the powerful overhead stroke, for which Paraguayans are renowned. It was Pepe, one of the most splendid swimmers I ever knew, but all his strength was wanted, if he was to succeed in his object. He had been carried down with the current, and was just below the treasure-canoe. He turned and fought upstream, until at length the boat glided down upon him. Then hand over hand he drew himself along her side until he reached the stern, and could drag himself in. But it was too late. I saw his danger. I could see that the speed of the current had increased ; and I could imagine his feeling of disappointment and despair when he searched for the paddle, and found it missing. Being so strong a swimmer, perhaps even

yet his life might have been saved, had he thrown himself into the water, and made for the shore ; but he seemed to have no thought of deserting the boat, and when I last saw him he was sitting in the stern, trying to direct her, by the swaying of his body. In the awful thunder of the tumbling waters, as we drew nearer and nearer to the Falls, no human voice could reach him, and he either failed to see my signals, or thought it his duty to disobey them, and to stand by the canoe and its precious freight. The dense mist, the clouds of spray, which rise above the cataract soon hid him from my view, but I rushed across the promontory and stood above the narrow coffin-like gorge, through which the river takes a fearful leap down the side of the Cordillera de Maracayú.

“At the top, the waters surge in mad waves, dashing wildly against the rocky points, that hinder their suicidal course, and then breaking free, they shoot into space, and in one mass of creamy-white foam, they plunge from the first of the ‘Seven Steps’ of the cataract of Guayra, and fall with irresistible force upon the second, with a noise that might compete with the artillery of the world.

“A fitting salvo to the honour of a man, who had never feared death, on land or water ! Through the surge and mist, at the top of the Falls, a black object, flashed past me, as the porpoise springs from the sea-waves, in the wake of an ocean steamer ; the canoe, with its one tenant had crossed my vision, but I never

saw where it fell. Somewhere, probably at the foot of the lowest of the 'Seven Steps,' lie the bones of Pepe, my faithful friend and follower, the last victim of that fatal treasure; and not far from him is the treasure itself, never again to appear until some gigantic force of Nature lays bare the bed of the river, or some unexampled feat of engineering, diverts the course of the Alto Paraná."

Not a word was uttered, we sat in silence, not thinking of the treasure, but of the noble lad that had been our companion, and had won the regard of every member of the expedition. And then Willis spoke again.

"The rest of the story is hardly worth telling; it was useless to make a long journey by the river when we could cross Paraguay by land, and so we surrendered to Ramirez and his party. Doña Ramóna grew soft and amiable in trying to console Inez, for the loss of her lover, and we parted the best of friends. The authorities kept me for some time a prisoner in Villa Rica, but one day I gave them the slip, and came home."

Thus ends the narrative of our expedition. It cured my mania for gold-seeking, it gave back health to Rayne, and it afforded an opportunity for Willis to re-visit the glorious tropical land, for which he had acquired an affection, that we are now in a position to declare, is fully merited.

In spite of all that she has gone through, in spite

of the towns and villages in ruins ;—of her decimated population ;—of her pasture-lands, deserted and denudded of cattle ;—the little Republic is once more raising her head, and there is, happily, no longer a *Lopez* to throw down the gauntlet, and challenge her neighbours to an unequal combat.

The day is gradually approaching when her increasing trade will break through the narrow bounds, to which it has been limited by the envy and jealousy of the Sister Republics ;—when her products of tobacco, coffee, indigo, and caoutchouc, will meet with a demand in markets more distant, but more just, than those of the River Plate ;—and when the unrivalled timber of her magnificent forests, will be floated down the Paraná, and find its way to Europe, to be converted into the most durable of parquetry, and the handsomest of furniture.

English capital is again commencing to flow towards the country, and this time, fortunately, not in the shape of public loans, but in the hands of private individuals, to be employed in the acquisition of land, and in the development of trade, and it may be hoped that, with it, brighter days will dawn on Paraguay.

We are constantly reminded of its beauties, its people, and even of its language, for the little parrot still sits on its mistress's shoulder, and warbles its Guarani love-song to the lady, who, on the distant Plains of Chiriguele, was once designated

A PARAGUAYAN TREASURE.

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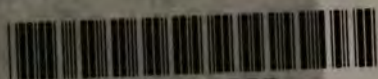
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